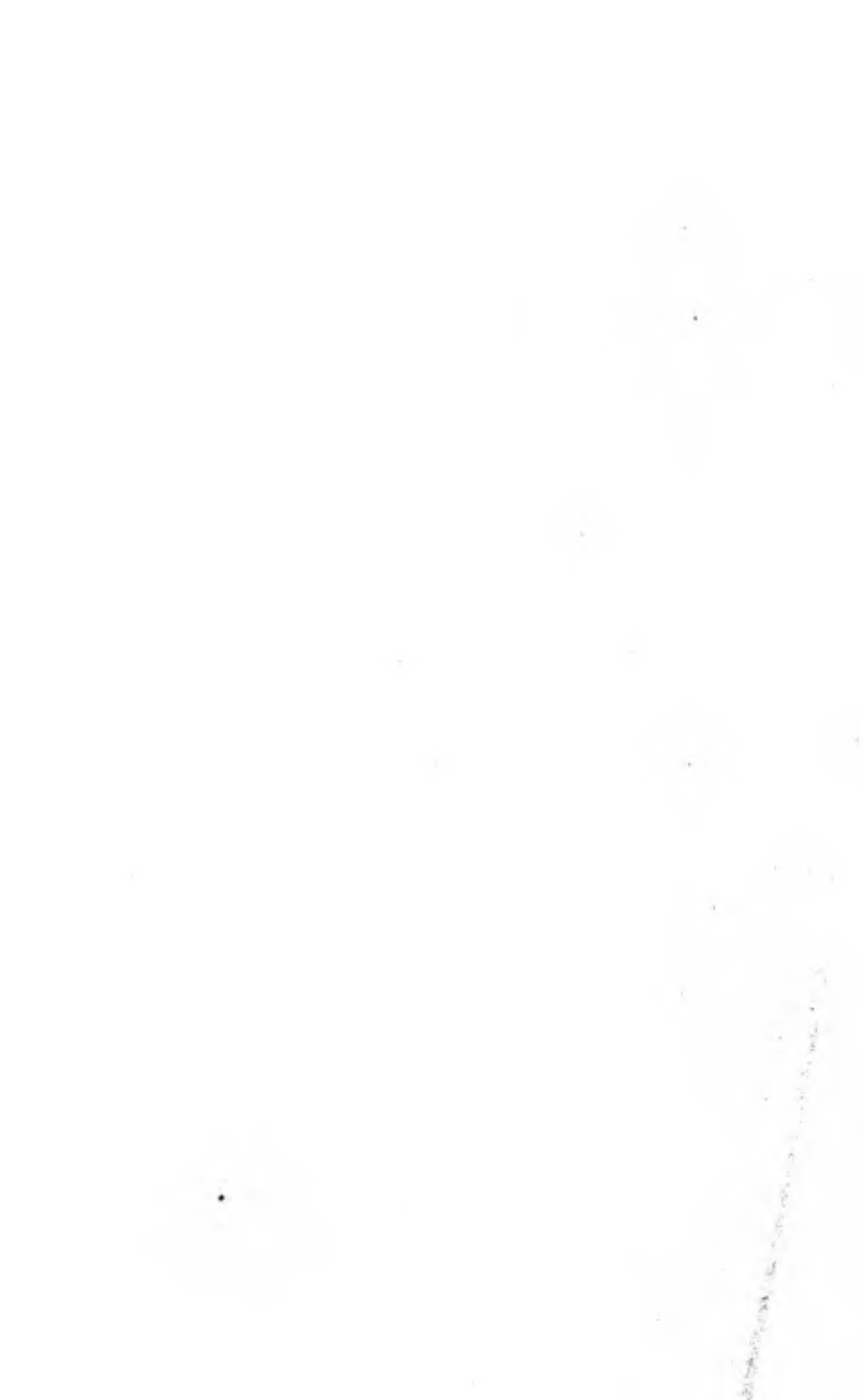


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THE PHILOSOPHY OF
THE ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATA

*With the compliments
of
The Upacharya
(Vice-Chancellor)*

*Visva-Bharati
Santiniketan P. O.
West Bengal.*



THE PHILOSOPHY
OF
THE ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATA

VOLUME I
METAPHYSICS

23419

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FOREWORD

Professor Siddheśvara Bhaṭṭācārya has brought out an excellent book on The Philosophy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata. Of the eighteen Purāṇas, the Bhāgavata and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa are the most important.

In this book the author discusses the problems of metaphysics, religion and ethics with vast learning and deep insight. The author relates the teaching of the Bhāgavata to its background in the Upaniṣads and points out how it influenced the later developments of the Vedānta system in Nimbārka, Vallabha and Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.

The nature of Ultimate Reality is described with emphasis on the Bhāgavata doctrine which looks upon the Ultimate as Brahman, Parama-ātman and Bhagavān. Without the idea of an Absolute Being, relativity itself becomes meaningless. For every relative is relative to something else. We cannot hold anything to be relative if we do not go beyond it. The Absolute in its transcendent nature is called Brahman, in its immanent nature Parama-ātman, in its transcendent-immanent nature Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa is for the Bhāgavata, bhagavān svayam. The discussion of avatāra is enlightening.

The essential feature of the Indian tradition which discards nothing of the past but tolerates even outworn forms is brought out. Since the Divine is too vast to be grasped by ordinary minds we use symbols. Even the outworn creeds and rituals are the records of the sincere searchings of fellowmen of the past.

Though knowledge, jñāna, and action, karman, are

paid adequate attention, the main stress of the Bhāgavata is on devotion, bhakti. It is this emphasis that makes the Bhāgavata a very popular work read in its original Sanskrit version or in the renderings in the regional languages by almost all devout Hindus.

I have no doubt that Professor Bhaṭṭācārya's work on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata will remain for long a standard treatise on the subject.

New Delhi
9 August 1960

A. Radhakrishnan

ABBREVIATIONS

AV	<i>Atharva-Veda</i>
Ai B	<i>Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa</i>
Ai U	<i>Aitareya-Upaniṣad</i>
ABORI	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</i>
BDS	<i>Baudhāyana-dharma-sūtra</i>
BS	<i>Brahma-sūtra</i>
BU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad</i>
BVP	<i>Brahma-Vaivarta-Purāṇa</i>
Ch U	<i>Chāndogya-Upaniṣad</i>
HDS	<i>History of Dharmasāstra</i>
IHQ	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i>
JARS	<i>Journal of the Assam Research Society</i>
JB	<i>Jaiminiya-Brāhmaṇa</i>
JBORS	<i>Journal of the Bihar Oriental Research Society</i>
JBRAS	<i>Journal of the Bombay Royal Asiatic Society</i>
KP	<i>Kūrma-Purāṇa</i>
KSS	<i>Kātyāyana-śrauta-sūtra</i>
Kaṭ U	<i>Kaṭha-Upaniṣad</i>
Kau U	<i>Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad</i>
MB	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MP	<i>Matsya-Purāṇa</i>
Mahā U	<i>Tri-pāḍ-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad</i>
Mān U	<i>Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad</i>
Mun U	<i>Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad</i>
NIA	<i>New Indian Antiquary</i>
PP	<i>Padma-Purāṇa</i>
PU	<i>Praśna-Upaniṣad</i>
RPVU	<i>The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads</i>
RV	<i>Rg-Veda</i>
SB	<i>Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa</i>
SBE	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i>
ŚU	<i>Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad</i>
SV	<i>Sāma-Veda</i>
TA	<i>Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka</i>
TB	<i>Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa</i>
TS	<i>Taittirīya-Saṁhitā</i>
TU	<i>Taittirīya-Upaniṣad</i>
VD	<i>Viṣṇu-dharmottara</i>
VP	<i>Viṣṇu-Purāṇa</i>
VS	<i>Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā</i>
Vā P	<i>Vāyu-Purāṇa</i>

VEDĀH PURĀṆAM KĀVYAM CA PRABHUR MITRAM PRIYEVA CA.
BODHAYANTĪTI HI PRĀHUS TRI-VAD BHĀGAVATAM PUNAH...

Vopadeva (*Hari-līlā'mṛta*, I.9)

INTRODUCTION

Cultural history of a nation is comprised of sustained chronicle of its tradition. A particular stage of human history is marked by certain achievements, besides the hopes and aspirations which it had sought to realise. Such hopes and aspirations receding to the past imbue the achievements with a halo. As a result, emerges heritage that guides the present with the promise to build up a better future. The chain of achievements and aspirations constitutes tradition. Tradition therefore is woven with fact and fiction; and, as human history goes back to a many millennium, the freeplay of tradition even in the earliest records of a nation is only what can legitimately be expected.

It is no wonder then that even the *Rg-Veda* would contain references to the bygone days.¹ Knowledge of this ancient (*purāṇa*) lore (*itihāsa*)² was necessary for the proper understanding of the *Rg-Veda*. The importance as well as the bulk of such narratives necessitated their compilation in a proper form; and, the discerning mind classified them into two categories—the “*Itihāsa*” and the “*Purāṇa*”—according as they were looked upon to represent history and mythology respectively. The *Atharva-Veda*³ which enumerates the *Itihāsa* (history) and the *Purāṇa* (mythology) besides the *Vedas* bears the first testimony to such compilation and classification of the ancient lore into separate Books. But the border line between the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa* remained undefined; for, the Indian mind, engrossed in delineation of thoughts, was, as a rule, unresponsive to historical needs. Both the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa* were therefore as much history as myth. It was natural then that the first conscious effort to introduce discrimination between history and myth, as evinced in the *Atharva-Veda*, would

¹ RV 1.112, 116 ; 10.39

² The *Matsya-Purāṇa* defines the “*Purāṇa*” as “*purātanasya kalpasya purāṇānām vidur budhāḥ*” 53.62

³ *tam itihāsaś ca purāṇaṅ ca gāthāś ca nārāsaṁśiś ca’nuvyacalan*
AV 15.6.11

fall into disfavour and a collective term "*Itihāsa-Purāṇa*" to describe the ancient lore in general would gain popularity instead. The *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*,⁴ the *Baudhāyana-dharma-sūtra*,⁵ the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*⁶—all have chosen to designate this type of composition by the collective name "*Itihāsa-Purāṇa*".

The attempt to recognise distinction between the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa* reasserted itself when two big slices—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*—were taken out as the *Itihāsa*, of the mass of ancient lore with its ever-growing volume ensured by its recital at the rituals, still practised to this day. The rest was treated as the *Purāṇas*. But neither the Epics nor the *Purāṇas* were, as hithertobefore, exclusively historical or mythological. Both were equally history and myth. That the Epics as distinguished from the *Purāṇas* were nevertheless regarded as the *Itihāsa* is borne out by the evidence of the *Brahma-Vaivarta-Purāṇa*⁷ and the observation of Śrīdhara.⁸ Among the reasons which had contributed to the separation of the Epics from the main body of the ancient lore was probably the pre-eminence of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the galaxy of the revelations of Viṣṇu, that called for independent treatment for each of them, against the general background of solar and lunar dynasties respectively.

The departure of the two Epics from the main body of the ancient lore offers only a glimpse into the panorama of the evolution of the *Purāṇa* literature. As already indicated, the *Purāṇa* in its earliest form (as the old tradition) is presupposed even by the *R̥g-Veda*. Winternitz is inclined to think that "similar to the *Vedic Samhitās* there existed one or several collections of *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, made up of myths and legends, legends of gods and tales of demons, snake dieties, old sages (*R̥ṣis*) and kings of ancient times".⁹ The earlier view on this

⁴ *itihāsa-purāṇāṇi ca* TB 3.12.8.2

⁵ *itihāsa-purāṇaṁ* BDS 2.5.9.14

⁶ *itihāsa-purāṇaṁ pañcamam vedānām vedam* Ch U 7.1.7

⁷ *itihāso bhārataṁ ca vālmiki-kāvyaṁ eva ca* BVP 4.131.22

⁸ While commenting on 1.1.6 Śrīdhara observes:—
itihāso mahābhārata'di

⁹ A History of Indian Literature Vol. 1, p. 313.

issue is voiced by Pargiter who, on the basis of a *Purāṇa* like the *Matsya*,¹⁰ contends that there was *one* original *Purāṇa*.¹¹ This view however seems to synchronise with the statement in the *Atharva-Veda* of the "*Purāṇa*" in singular, beside the three *Vedas*, as already noted above.

But irrespective of the fact whether the *Purāṇa* was originally one or many, it is clear that since the days of the *Atharva-Veda* the *Purāṇa* literature was growing by leaps and bounds. This was duly noticed by Āpastamba (not later than the third century B.C., and possibly 150-200 years earlier)¹² who "quotes from *Purāṇas*, viz, three doctrines from a *Purāṇa* and one from the *Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa*".¹³

The contents of the *Purāṇa* literature in course of its evolution seem to have been largely determined by the purpose it was called upon to serve from time to time. Originally, as we have already noticed, the *Purāṇa* would throw light on the *Rg-Vedic* allusions. During the *Brāhmaṇa* period "the recital of narrative poems formed a part of the religious ceremonies at the sacrificial and domestic festivals. Thus the daily recitation of legends of gods and heroes belonged to the preliminary celebration, which lasted a whole year, of the great horse-sacrifice".¹⁴ To serve the needs of the sacrifice the *Purāṇas* would naturally deal with matters which a sacrifice involves. A sacrifice as a rule involves gods to receive oblations, hermits such as those to whom the *Vedic Mantras* were revealed, and men specially the kings who would put their financial and other resources at the disposal of the priests to make the sacrifice a success. During the *Brāhmaṇa* period Prajāpati was the highest of the gods. It was he who originally brought the world into existence. Similarly Manu was the first father of men and kings, while hermits were traced to Prajāpati. The assembly of gods, hermits and kings in a particular sacrifice was thought to be a repetition of the same in bygone days. So, a particular assembly such as that falling

¹⁰ *purāṇam ekam evā'sīt tadā kalpā'ntare'nagha*. MP 53.4ab

¹¹ Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, Ch. 4.

¹² Bühler, SBE Vol. II, p. xliii.

¹³ Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p. 43.

¹⁴ A History of Indian Literature Vol. I, p. 311.

during the *Brāhmaṇa* period is conceived to have happened in a particular Manu-cycle which in due course will be changed for another Manu-cycle.

Sacrificial milieu promoted such speculations; and, they seem to have determined the contents which a *Purāṇa*, in order to form significant part of the sacrifice, should include. The emergence of gods and hermits from Prajāpati involved creation (*sarga*). They continued for a considerable period to receive offerings and propagate knowledge respectively. The chronicle of their continuance (*vaṁśa*) had therefore to be recognised. Then, there were kings given to the performance of *Vedic* sacrifices and their unbroken continuity, so necessary for the continuity of sacrifice itself, finds recognition as well (*vaṁśā'nucarita*). But the chain of *Vedic* performances comes to a halt when there is a change-over from one Manu to another. Such change-over means a dissolution (*pralaya*) followed by a new creation (*prati-sarga*). The new regime of another Manu (*Manvantara*) gives fresh impetus to the creation of gods, hermits and kings who give themselves to sacrifices as their predecessors in the previous *Manvantara* did. A *Purāṇa* to maintain its dignity as a part of the sacrifice would glorify the heroic deeds of gods and kings designed to rule the world for its material and moral prosperity for long long time. Then the time-worn structure of the world is pulled down and a new one is built up in its stead.

Creation (*sarga*), re-creation (*prati-sarga*) after dissolution, genealogy of gods and hermits (*vaṁśa*), history of dynasties (*vaṁśā'nucarita*) and Manu-periods of time (*Manvantara*) had therefore constituted the five categories under which diverse old materials were organised, it may be said, during the *Brāhmaṇa* period. Compilations containing these five were called *Purāṇas*. The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* defines a *Purāṇa* in terms of these five categories.²⁵ It is difficult to state whether Āpas-

²⁵ *sargaś ca prati-sargaś ca vaṁśa-manvantarāṇi ca. sarveṣveteṣu kathyante vaṁśā'nucaritaṇ ca yat..* VP 3.6.25
The *Matsya-Purāṇa* defines in the same vein :—
sargaś ca prati-sargaś ca vaṁśo manvantarāṇi ca. vaṁśā'nucaritaṇ caiva purāṇaṁ pañca-lakṣaṇam.. 53.64
So does the *Brahma-Vaivarta* :—
sargaś ca prati-sargaś ca vaṁśo manvantarāṇi ca. vaṁśā'nucaritaṇ vipra purāṇaṁ pañca-lakṣaṇam.. 4.131.6

tamba found the *Purāṇas* of his time to consist in all the five topics. But as both the extant *Purāṇas* as well as the *Mahābhārata* do contain these five topics they may be said with some conviction to have emerged from the *Itihāsa-purāṇa* consisting in the five topics (*pañca-lakṣaṇa*). The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* states that having compiled the four *Vedas*, Vyāsa had effected for Romaharṣaṇa, a bard (*sūta*) whom he had selected for imparting the teachings on the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa*,¹⁶ a compilation (*saṁhitā*) of the *Purāṇa* with *Ākhyānas*, *Upākhyānas*, *Gāthās* and *Kalpas*, i.e., stories, anecdotes, ballads and descriptions of vast cosmic periods.¹⁷ According to the evidence of the *Matsya-Purāṇa*, Vyāsa composed the *Mahābhārata* after he had finished the compilation of all the *Purāṇas*.¹⁸ Although the extant *Purāṇas* are on the whole later than the extant *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas* in their earlier form may be construed to have preceded the *Mahābhārata*. That such *Purāṇas* did exist is borne out from the citations of Āpastamba, as noticed before.

Both the bulks of compilations—the *Itihāsas* (represented by the Epics) and the *Purāṇas* (represented by the eighteen *Mahā-Purāṇas* and the *Upa-Purāṇas* of the same number)—originally meant by Vyāsa for his disciple Romaharṣaṇa, now addressed themselves to the task of elucidating the teachings of the *Vedas*.¹⁹ Already the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*²⁰ had raised the status of the *Itihāsa-Purāṇa* by recognising it as the fifth *Veda* and full implications of this prestige were sought to be realised by the Epics on the one hand and the *Purāṇas* on the other. As a contrast to the *Vedic* orthodoxy, the Epics and the *Purāṇas* threw open their gates to all, irrespective of caste and creed; and, the different waves of human incursion into the Indian soil embraced them as their *Vedas*. And, they were not mistaken.

¹⁶ roma-harṣaṇa-nāmānam mahā-buddhiṁ mahā-muniḥ.
sūtam jagrāha śiṣyam sa itihāsa-purāṇayoḥ.. VP 3.4.10

¹⁷ ākhyānaiḥ cā'pyupākhyānair gāthābhiḥ kalpa-buddhibhiḥ.
purāṇa-saṁhitān cakre purāṇārtha-viśāradaḥ.. VP 3.6.15

¹⁸ aṣṭa-daśa purāṇāṇi kṛtvā satyavati-sutaḥ.
bhārata-khyānam akhilaṁ cakre tad-upaśrīṁhitam.. MP 53.69

¹⁹ itihāsa-purāṇābhyāṁ vedam samupabṛmhaḥ.
bibhetyalpa-śrutād vedo mām ayaṁ prahariṣyati..

MB 1.1.260 ; VāP 1.1.181

²⁰ itihāsa-purāṇaṁ pañcamam vedānam vedam Ch U 7.1.7

The Epics and the *Purāṇas* did bring to them the message of the *Vedas*, their cardinal teachings, in popular assimilable form of myths and fables some of which are their innovations, besides drawing upon the old historical tradition. But it was not a one-way traffic. The populace freely contributed its share of thoughts and feelings which found rightful place in the Epics and the *Purāṇas*. Thus *Tīrtha*-stories, temple-worship, indigenous medical science, witchcraft—in fact, whatever was deemed to be of some use to humanity, religious or secular—found entrance in the *Purāṇas* so that they became in time encyclopaedia of world-knowledge.

The bards—Romaharṣaṇa, his disciples and their disciples and so on—nourished under their loving care the *Purāṇa* literature to attain a gigantic magnitude in times that followed. Among the materials that contributed to its growth the influence of *Vaiṣṇavism* is conspicuously felt. Under its auspices the five topics of a *Purāṇa* underwent further elaboration. Creation (*sarga*) was viewed under two heads, subtle and gross. The subtle creation stopped with the emergence of the cosmic egg (*aṇḍa*). Then followed the creation of the fourteen worlds—the gross creation. While the subtle creation was called by the old name "*sarga*", gross creation attained the name "*visarga*" i.e., differentiation. As "*pratisarga*" presupposes deluge, both physical annihilation (*nirrodha*) as well as salvation (*mukti*) attainable by total disappearance of the physical world that ensnares the individual soul, came under deluge, the part of *pratisarga*. The glorious deeds of gods and kings can thrive only in an atmosphere of law and order (*sthāna*) ensured by God, the supreme being, Who looks after the welfare (*poṣaṇa*) of the gods and kings (including ordinary men) with the help of His devotees as well as by His incarnations (*avatāra*). But the performance of ephemeral deeds on the part of gods and kings can only add to their material lust (*karma-vāsanā*). Emancipation lies beyond creation. Indeed one should go for that to the root of creation, *Brahman*. The stories of gods, hermits and kings should therefore be understood to further the cause of God when gods, hermits and kings submit themselves to the divine purpose. To discover the hand of God in creation, sustenance and destruction is to prepare the ground

for emancipation. The treatment of different topics in the *Purāṇas* is therefore significant. It raises the mind to the high metaphysical plane leading to the realisation of the supreme truth (*Brahman*). The elaboration of the five topics to ten as found in the *Bhāgavata*²¹ and the *Brahma-Vaivarta*²² suggests the orientation of the *Purāṇa* literature from their mundane character to high metaphysics.

It was therefore in fitness of things that the period of the “*parama-bhāgavata*” Imperial Guptas, marked by the renaissance of Hinduism with its predominantly *Vaiṣṇava* strain, would be betrothed to the compiling of some four lacs of verses and prose passages out of the medley of myriads of materials²³ deposited in the *Purāṇa* literature through its growth over centuries.²⁴ These compilations mirrored Hinduism of the period with its undertone of *Vaiṣṇavism* carefully enthused into them by the Gupta emperors. The eighteen Books into which these compilations were rearranged and which as a special mark of distinction acquired the name “*mahā-purāṇa*” (the great *Purāṇas*) bespeak their preference for *Vaiṣṇavism*. The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* enumerates the *Mahā-Purāṇas* in an order which it

²¹ atra sargo visargaś ca sthānam poṣaṇam ūtayaḥ.
manvantareśā'nukathā nirodho muktir āśrayaḥ..
daśamasya viśuddhyartham navānām iha lakṣaṇam.
varṇayanti mahātmānaḥ fruteṇā'rthena cā'ñjasā..
bhūtamātreṇ dṛiḍya-dhiyāṁ janma sarga udāhṛtaḥ.
brahmaṇo guṇa-vaśam yād visargaḥ pauruṣaḥ smṛtaḥ..
sthītir vaikunṭha-vijayaḥ poṣaṇam tad-anugrahaḥ.
manvantarāṇi sad-dharma ūtayaḥ karma-vāsanāḥ..
avatārā'nucaritaḥ hareḥ cā'syā'nuvartinām.
puṁsām īśa-kathāḥ proktā nānā'khyānopabṛmhitāḥ..
nirodho'syā'nusayanaṁ ātmanaḥ saha śaktibhiḥ.
muktir hitvā'nyathā-rūpaṁ svarūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ..
ābhāsaś ca nirodhaś ca yato'styādhyavaśiyate.
sa āśrayaḥ param brahma paramātmēti śabdyate..

2.10.1-7 vide also 12.7.11-19

²² BVP 4.131.8-10.

²³ purāṇam ekam evā'sit śata-koṭi-pravistaram MP 53.4ad

²⁴ evaṁ purāṇa-saṁkhyānaṁ catur-lakṣaṁ udāhṛtam.
aṣṭa-daśa-purāṇānām nāma caitad vidur budhāḥ.. BVP 4.131.21

claims to be chronological.²⁵ The same order and the same names (with slight variations) are noticeable in several other *Purāṇas* such as the *Matsya*²⁶ and the *Brahma-Vaivarta*.²⁷ This shows that the special distinction attributed to the eighteen collections was refused to other collections (*Upa-Purāṇas*) consisting of materials both old and new. At best such other collections, which were also correspondingly held to be eighteen in number, were looked upon as the outgrowths of the eighteen *Mahā-Purāṇas*.²⁸ The eighteen *Mahā-Purāṇas* have since been enjoying their exalted status as the interpreters of the *Vedic* truths, besides serving as the repositories of diverse materials, religious as well as secular, in response to their needs to feed the popular mind. To accentuate the difference between the *Mahā-Purāṇas* and the *Upa-Purāṇas* it was said²⁹ that while the former dealt with ten topics the latter confined themselves to five only.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is the fifth, according to the order laid down by the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, among the eighteen *Mahā-purāṇas* just as the *Purāṇa* is the fifth among the *Vedas*. It has freely drawn upon the *Mahābhārata*, the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and the *Hari-varṇṣa*, for materials. In fact the fire of

²⁵ *ādyaṁ sarva-purāṇānāṁ purāṇaṁ brāhmam ucyate. aṣṭa-daśa-purāṇāni purāṇa-jñāḥ pracakṣate.. brāhmaṇaṁ pādmaṁ vaiṣṇavaṁ ca śaivaṁ bhāgavatam tathā. tathā'nyan nāradyaṁ ca mārkandeyaṁ ca saptaṁam.. āgneyam aṣṭamaṁ caiva bhaviṣyan navamaṁ smṛtam. daśamaṁ brahma-vaivarttaṁ laiṅgam ekādaśam smṛtam.. vārāhaṁ dvādaśaṁ caiva skāndaṁ cā'tra trayodaśam. catur-daśam vāmanaṁ ca kaurmaṁ pañcadaśam tathā.. māṇṣyaṁ ca gārudaṁ caiva brahmāṇḍaṁ ca tataḥ param. mahā-purāṇānyetāni hyaṣṭādaśa mahā-mune.. VP 3.6.20-24*

²⁶ MP Ch. 53

²⁷ BVP 4.133.11-20

²⁸ *anyānyupapurāṇāni munibhiḥ kathitāni tu. aṣṭa-daśa purāṇāni śrutvā saṁkṣepato dvijāḥ.. ādyam sanatkuṁāroktam nārasimham ataḥ param. tṛtīyam skāndam uddiṣṭam kumāreṇa tu bhāṣitam.. caturthaṁ śiva-dharmā'khyam sākṣaṁ nandiśa-bhāṣitam. durvāsaoktam āścaryam nāradyam ataḥ param.. kṛpilaṁ vāmanaṁ caiva tathaivośanasaritam. brahmāṇḍam vāruṇaṁ caiva kālīkā'hyam eva ca.. māheśvaram tathā śāmbam sauram sarvārtha-saṁcayam. parāśaroḥktaṁ māricam tathiva bhārgava'hyam.. KP 1.1.16-20*

²⁹ BVP beginning with *sargaś ca prati-sargaś ca etc.* concludes:—*etaḥ upa-purāṇānāṁ lakṣaṇaṁ ca vidur budhāḥ.. 4.131.7ab*

Vaiṣṇavism that was brooding through the *Mahābhārata* round the figure of Śrī-Kṛṣṇa grew in intensity in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and the *Hari-varṇa* before it burst into flames in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. For instance, Kṛṣṇa was just a Descent (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu though he had then grown into an exalted figure in the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and more so in the *Hari-varṇa*, he was absorbing the essence of Viṣṇu in his own self, as Viṣṇu's sportive nature was gradually coming to the forefront. In the *Bhāgavata*, Śrī-Kṛṣṇa was "*Bhagavān*", the highest reality, the perennial source of bliss and enchantment. Life sprang from Kṛṣṇa, which by the law of its own distributed itself into infinite dimensions of innumerable physical worlds. All manifestations, whether spiritual or physical, demonstrate the freeplay of divine play of the master artist. This was Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata* although the last vestige of his original character as a Descent of Viṣṇu is still echoed in the *Bhāgavata*. One might say that *Bhagavān* Śrī-Kṛṣṇa of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is the highest *Vedic* truth that incorporated in its all-comprehensive nature *Vedic* Viṣṇu whose stature had been developing steadily through the *Vedas*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*, as it embraced the historical Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, mentioned in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*.

The sublime metaphysical plane of the *Bhāgavata* explains why the *Bhāgavata* and in its wake the *Brahma-Vaivarta* have elaborated the original five constituent topics of a *Purāṇa* into ten. Śrīdhara has ascribed great distinction to the *Bhāgavata* on the ground that it was the *Bhāgavata* where all the ten topics, mentioned above, have received adequate treatment³⁰ although the extant *Purāṇas* of distinction (*Mahā-Purāṇas*) hardly accommodated all the ten topics. The same metaphysical attitude has encouraged the *Bhāgavata* to propound that the first nine topics are intended merely to bring the Ultimate Reality to clearer perspective.³¹ Creation (*sarga*) and re-creation (*prati-sarga*) of all physical existence from Brahmā down to the clod were therefore held only to expose its transi-

³⁰ Śrīdhara comments on 12.7.10 :—

daśabhir etair lakṣaṇair — arthair yuktam mahā-purāṇam viduḥ

³¹ *daśamasya viśuddhyartham navānām iha lakṣaṇam.*

sa āśrayaḥ param brahma paramātmēti śabdyate.. 2.10.2ab, 7cd

toriness.³² The staggering mass of physical planes is just a demonstration of the gross form of God, intended to serve as the first step of the progressively spiritual journey to His subtle essence.³³ Genealogy (*vaṁśa* and *vaṁśā'nucarita*) is just a peg to hang the stories, anecdotes and narratives of gods, hermits and kings (including men). They need not therefore be taken literally. They are invoked only to enhance the fervour of knowledge and detachment.³⁴ Similarly *Manvantara* may be viewed as a milestone to the grand march of time symbolizing the infinitude of God.³⁵ So, creation and destruction belong to God who, by His devotees—gods, hermits and men (including kings)—and also by His direct Incarnations, maintains law and order in His creation and thus furthers His divine cause, between creation and destruction. This is God's sustenance. If the created being realises His divine purpose it enters His eternal abode of bliss and light. If on the other hand it indulges in materialism it has to court the cycles of births and deaths. A rational being has to utilise its power of discrimination in this respect, which is a natural gift from God.

Such revolutionary attitude towards old values, nourished so tenderly in the *Purāṇas*, naturally provoked serious questions. Was the *Bhāgavata* in face of such radical view entitled to the great distinction reserved for the celebrated eighteen? Should not the *Devī-Bhāgavata* with all the five traditional constituents of a *Purāṇa* have claim for that distinction instead? Did not the approach of the *Bhāgavata*, so fundamentally different from that of the other *Mahā-Purāṇas*, apart from the question of its grandiose style, warrant its composition by a hand other than that of Vyāsa, the compiler of the other *Purāṇas*? Could not Vopadeva (12th century), the grammarian and the celebrated author of the *Muktā-phala* and the *Hari-Līlā'mṛta*, the two

³² *nityadā sarva-bhūtānāṁ brahmā'dīnāṁ parantapa. utpatti-pralayāveka sūkṣma-jñāḥ sampracakṣate..* 12.4.35

³³ *śrūtvā yathā sthūla-sūkṣma-rūpaṁ bhagavato yatīḥ. sthūle nirjītam ātmānaṁ śanaīḥ sūkṣmaṁ dhiyā nayed iti..* 5.26.39

³⁴ *kathā imās te kathitā mahīyasāṁ vitāya lokaṣu yataḥ pareyuṣāṁ. vijñāna-vairāgya-vivakṣayā vibho vaco vibhūtir na tu pāramārthyam..* 12.3.14

³⁵ *antaḥ puruṣa-rūpeṇa kāla-rūpeṇa yo bahiḥ. samanvetyeṣa sattvānāṁ bhagavān ātma-māyayā..* 3.26.18

Vaiṣṇava works, be plausibly credited with the authorship of this work which is admittedly a late composition?

It must be admitted that questions like these have echoed through centuries. The attempt of at least two *Purāṇas* viz, the *Matsya*³⁶ and the *Padma*³⁷ to define the *Bhāgavata* reflects this doubt about the genuineness of the *Bhāgavata* to be considered as one of the eighteen *Mahā-Purāṇas*. Śrīdhara (14th century) invokes these definitions to disabuse one's mind of such doubt. The *Bhāgavata*, he argues, is completely pledged to the highest knowledge (*brahma-vidyā*) and so, he concludes, it has every claim to be regarded as a *Mahā-Purāṇa*, and none else should rob it of this status.³⁸ Nilakaṇṭha, the commentator on the *Devī-Bhāgavata*, is also aware of this problem; but, he tries to forge a compromise by admitting the claim of both the *Purāṇas*.³⁹ The question still looms large at least in some minds as three polemical writings on the same issue would indicate.⁴⁰

It is difficult, if not impossible, to deny the great distinction of a *Mahā-Purāṇa* to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* which by virtue of its "enormous popularity and extraordinary reputation" is acknowledged as the "most famous in India".⁴¹ "The extremely numerous manuscripts and prints of the text itself, as well as of many commentaries on the whole work and of separate explanatory writings on parts of it in addition to the translations into Indian vernaculars bear witness to this". In-

³⁶ *yatrā dhikṛtya gāyatrīm varṇyate dharma-vistaraḥ.*
uṣṭrā'sura-vadhopeṭam tad bhāgavatam ucyate.. MP 53.20

³⁷ *grantho'ṣṭā-daśa-sāhasro dvādaśa-skandha-saṁyutaḥ.*
parikṣic-chuka-saṁvādeḥ śrīmad-bhāgavatā'bhīdhaḥ..

PP, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* 195.29

³⁸ Śrīdhara comments on 1.1.1. :—

gāyatrī prārambheṇa gāyatrī'khyā-brahma-vidyā-rūpam etat pur-
āṇam iti darśitam. yathoktam matsya-purāṇe.... parāṇāntare ca...
padma-purāṇe ca.... ata eva bhāgavatam nāmā'nyad ityapi nā-
śaṅkenīyam.

³⁹ *Devī-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*—Comm. of Nilakaṇṭha, p. 25.

⁴⁰ *Durjana-mukha-capeṭikā* by Rāma-kṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa, *Durjana-mukha-mahā-capeṭikā* by Kāśī-nātha Bhaṭṭa and *Durjana-mukha-padma-pādukā* by an unknown disputant—all translated by Burnouf, I.c.I., Préface p. lix ff.

⁴¹ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* Vol. I, pp. 554-5

spired by "its crude simplicity and grandeur of the style of the *Vedas*, heroic nobleness of martial epos and great richness of modern poetry", Burnouf introduced it to Europe.⁴² It is "the first *Purāṇa* that has been edited and translated in Europe".⁴³ If all these speak for its distinction surely the *Bhāgavata* deserves due cognizance as a "*Mahā-Purāṇa*", indeed *one* of the best, if not *the best*, of the celebrated eighteen. The question of its composition by Vopadeva melts away by Alberuni's (about 1030 A.D.) reference to the *Bhāgavata* in which, according to his view, Vāsudeva has been extolled.⁴⁴ So, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* had existed at least a couple of centuries before Vopadeva was born.

Nevertheless it has been admitted, as it has been admitted by the *Bhāgavata* itself,⁴⁵ that the work does contain materials which are of late origin. It is therefore relevant now to enquire into the date of its composition. The different suggestions on this score are as follows:—

(i) Burnouf, Wilson, Colebrooke	1300 A.D. ⁴⁶
(ii) Bhāṇḍārkar	200 years before Ānandatīrtha. ⁴⁷
(iii) Vaidya, Winternitz	1000 A.D. ⁴⁸
(iv) Farquhar	900 A.D. ⁴⁹
(v) Eliot	800 or 900 A.D. ⁵⁰
(vi) D. S. Śāstrī	825 — 850 A.D. ⁵¹

⁴² Burnouf's Préface

⁴³ Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature Vol. I, p. 555

⁴⁴ Sachau, Alberuni's India, p. 131

⁴⁵ *tvayā khalu purāṇāni setihāsāni cā'nagha.*

ākhyātānyapyadhītāni dharma-śāstrāṇi yānyuta..

pumsām ekāntataḥ śreyas tan naḥ śamsitum arhasi.. 1.1.6, 9cd

⁴⁶ Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature Vol. I, p. 556

⁴⁷ R. G. Bhāṇḍārkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other Minor Religious Systems, p. 49

⁴⁸ Vaidya, 1925, JBRAS, pp. 144-48 ; Winternitz op. cit., p. 556

⁴⁹ Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, p. 233

⁵⁰ Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism, Intro.

⁵¹ D. S. Śāstrī, The Concise History of Vaiṣṇava Religion (Marāṭhī), p. 119

(vii) Kṛṣṇamūrti Śarmā	800 A.D. ⁵²
(viii) A. N. Roy	550 — 650 A.D. ⁵³
(ix) Hazra	600 A.D. ⁵⁴

Reference to the *Vaiṣṇava Bhāgavata* by Alberuni fixes the upper limit to 1030 A.D. The *Bhāgavata* pays high tribute⁵⁵ to the *Tamil* saints who in South India had fostered emotional devotion during the first millennium of the Christian era. It also refers to the *Hūṇas* (about 500 A.D.)⁵⁶ embracing *Vaiṣṇavism*.⁵⁷ The materials that augmented the structure of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* may therefore be said to fall between 500 A.D. and 1030 A.D. That the *Bhāgavata* received accretion of materials from South India especially from the *Tamil* region is corroborated by an episode from the *Padma-Purāṇa*: Devotion (*bhakti*) with her twin sons, knowledge (*jñāna*) and detachment (*vairāgya*), once travelled through different regions of South India until she together with her sons reached Vṛndāvana. Blooming youth surged upon her figure the moment she entered Vṛndāvana; but, her sons fainted away, shattered by long journey. Overwhelmed with grief she called upon the assistance of Nārada, the great devotee, who by the recitation

⁵² Kṛṣṇamūrti Śarmā, ABORI XIV, Parts I-II, 1932-33, pp. 190-207

⁵³ Roy, JARS II, p. 79

⁵⁴ Hazra, NIA I, pp. 523-524

⁵⁵ *kalau khalu bhaviṣyanti nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇāḥ.
kvacit kvacin mahārāja draviḍeṣu ca bhūriṣaḥ.
tāmraparṇi nadi yatra kṛtamālā payasvini.
kāverī ca mahā-puṇyā pratiṭi ca mahā-nadī.
ye pivanti jalam tāsām manujā manujesvara.
prāyo bhaktā bhagavati vāsudeve'malā'layāḥ.. 11.5.39cd, 40*

⁵⁶ Winternitz, op. cit., p. 525

⁵⁷ *kirāta-hūṇā'ndha-pulinda-pukkasā
ābhīra-śuhmā yavanāḥ khaśā'dayaḥ.
ye'nye ca pāpā yad-upāśrayā'śrayāḥ
śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ.. 2.4.18 vide also 2.7.46*

of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* brought about their rejuvenation.⁵⁸

The above story is highly suggestive. There is evidence⁵⁹ to show that as early as the first century B.C.⁶⁰ *Vaiṣṇavism* had travelled from North to South. It is also said⁶¹ that some of the *Purāṇas* were imported from North to South in the early Christian era. It can therefore be legitimately presumed that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* was one of them to receive early attention of South. So, devotion practised by the *Tamil* saints might have been adumbrated by the *Bhāgavata* climate. The development of devotion on amorous basis (in which God was conceived as the eternal lover and the devotees His beloved) naturally laid emphasis on the emotional aspect of devotion in which knowledge and detachment fell into insignificance. Perhaps, more than this could not be expected from the *Tamil* saints either, the bulk of whom comprised illiterate persons. The story of the *Padma-Purāṇa* suggests the amalgam of the boisterous devotion of the *Tamil* saints with that of the North Indian tradition of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. Such tradition therefore

⁵⁸ *dr̥ṣṭam vṛndāvanam tatra yatra līlā harer abhūt* 193.38
ekā tu taruṇī tatra niṣaṇṇā khinna-mānasā.
dvau vṛddhau patitau pārīve niḥśvasantāvacetanau.
śuśrūṣanti prabodhanti rudatī ca tayoḥ puraḥ. 193.39cd, 40

nārada uvāca

kā tvam etau ca kau bhadre 193.45a

bālovāca

aḥam bhaktir iti khyātā etau me tanau varau.
jñāna-vairāgya-nāmānau kāla-yogena jarjjarau. 193.47

utpannā draviḍe cāham karṇāte vṛddhim āgatā.
sthītā kiñcin mahārāṣṭre gurjare jirṇatām gatā. 193.51

vṛndāvanam idam praptā daiṣya-yogena nārada.
jātāham tu punar bālā navineva surūpiṇi. 193.53

imau tu śayitāvatra sutau me kṣiṣṭa-mānasau.
ativṛddhau parityajya gantum nāham kṣamādhunā. 193.54

nārada uvāca

upekṣataḥ kalau mandau vṛddhau jātāu sutau tava.
tathāpi cintām muñca tvam upāyam cintayāmyaham. 194.12cd, 13ab

kumārā ūcuḥ

vedopaniṣadām sārāj jātā bhāgavatī kathā. 194.63

śrīmad-bhāgavatam nāma purāṇam rasam eva hi.
bhakti-jñāna-virāgānām saukhyāyaiva prakāśitam. 194.67

nāradaḥ suprasannātmā kumārān abhyavādayat. 198.65cd

bhaktiḥ sutābhyaṁ sahita nāradeṇa pravartitā.
bhū-maṇḍale samaste'smin tadā prabhṛti śaunaka. 198.67

⁵⁹ Nanaghat Cave Inscription (Luder's Ins. No. 112, Epigraphia Indica, Vol. X, App. p. 121)

⁶⁰ Bhāṇḍārkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc.*, p. 4.

⁶¹ Dikṣitar, *IHQ VIII*, pp. 764-767

must be said to have pre-existed the amalgam resulting in the enrichment of the structure of the *Bhāgavata* by a dominant tone of amorous devotion.

It has therefore to be presumed that the North Indian tradition of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* which maintained a unique balance between *bhakti* on the one hand and *jñāna* as well as *vairāgya* on the other, (i.e., between emotion and reason) *did* exist before the particular development of emotion of the *Tamil* saints came to meet it. This fact tends to offer additional weight to the view that the *Purāṇas* in their essentials *did* exist before 500 A.D. to be overhauled into eighteen *Mahā-Purāṇas* during the Gupta period. One may add to this the fact that the *Purāṇas* *did* exist also before Āpastamba. The conclusion therefore seems to emerge that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* has three phases of development: Its earliest form consists of very old materials; it was given the shape of a *Mahā-Purāṇa*—and this is the second phase—in early Christian era; and, its last and final phase represents the contribution of the *Tamil* saints. Viewed from this point of view the extant *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* may be said to be contemporaneous with *Tamil* saints. Being a composition of growth it can hardly be assigned to a particular date. The three phases of development suggest, on the contrary, that the *Bhāgavata* was “at least thrice revised”.⁶² The *Hari-līlā-mṛta*, the tradition in the *Bhāgavata* itself⁶³ and Burnouf⁶⁴ all support this point of view.

But in spite of its manifold revisions, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* “bears the stamp of a unified composition”.⁶⁵ And this character, it is humbly submitted, has encouraged the author to make an attempt to discover the metaphysical perspective, “the wood behind the trees”. The author has no fascination for particular doctrines and has chosen to be guided by Śrīdhara,⁶⁶ the earliest and universally accepted commentator on the *Bhāgavata*, in understanding the literal meanings of the passages of the text; and, as a rule, the same word has been expected to

⁶² H. P. Śāstrī, JBORS XIV, Part III, *The Purāṇas*.

⁶³ 1.1.2, 2.2.8, 2.9.43, 2.1.8, 3.4.3, 3.8.7-9, 8.13.7, 12.4.41-42.

⁶⁴ Burnouf, p. 105

⁶⁵ Winternitz, op. cit., p. 556

⁶⁶ Farquhar, op. cit., p. 257.

yield the same meaning although it might have been scattered throughout the work. The author is alive to the fact that opinions are liable to differ both with regard to the principles of interpretation adopted here and also to the exposition given here of the basic tenets of the *Bhāgavata*. To err is also human and the author is only too conscious of his limitations. The author has tried to express his loyalty to the *spirit* of this great work that unravels consummation of sublime metaphysics and spiritual practice which had undergone dynamic growth from the *R̥g-Veda* onwards. Indeed the *Bhāgavata* has enshrined Indian religious thought. If the present attempt succeeds in touching upon the *fringe* of this cultural heritage of India, all pains will be amply rewarded.

The author's mind goes back to 1940 when sitting at the feet of the late Mm. Pramathanātha Tarkabhūṣaṇa, the then Director of Sanskrit Studies, Benares Hindu University, the author imbibed inspiration for this work, together with mellow light of the morning sun. The author respectfully remembers how Mm. Gopīnātha Kavirāja, the fountain of Oriental scholarship of the present century, initiated the author to the field of research and nursed his steps in the groping of his way into this treasure island. The same field has since been exploited for Ph.D. of the University of London, in which the guidance of Dr A. V. Kunst was always available, and for D.Litt. of the University of Lille (France) under the guidance of Professor O. Lacombe.

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S. BHATTACHARYA

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CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE OF REALITY

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* opens with spiritual contemplation of Supreme Truth—*satyaṁ param dhīmahi*.¹ It is the pledge of allegiance on the part of the *Bhāgavata* to a precious tradition. "May we contemplate the essence (*bhargas*) of the luminous Deity (*Savitṛ*)"—is the anxious yearning of the ancient seer of the *Rg-Vedic* hymn² for "His sovereign (*vareṇya*) essence motivates our psychic being (*dhiyaḥ*)". The *Sāma-Veda*,³ the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā*,⁴ the *Taittirīya-Saṁhitā*,⁵ the *Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka*,⁶ the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*⁷—in short, the *Vedic* tradition—have held fast to this eternal craving. It is no wonder then that the *Bhāgavata* which professes to be the "mature fruit" (*galitaṁ phalam*) of the *Vedas*,⁸ should duly catch the same flame. Indeed, the philosophy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is fed and nourished with the wealth of ideas, that has made its way into the mind of man, as the luminous Deity—*Savitṛ* or *Viṣṇu*—gradually unfolded His divine nature in his intellect and religious imagination.

The *Bhāgavata* method of approach to Reality is characteristically *Upaniṣadic*. In the wake of the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*,⁹ for example, the *Bhāgavata* starts metaphysical enquiry from the self within (*Jīva*); and, as its answer, reaches the all-

¹ *satyaṁ param dhīmahi*. 1.1.1.

² *tat savitur vareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*. RV 3.62.10.

³ SV 1462.

⁴ VS 3.35; 22.9; 30.2; 36.3.

⁵ TS 1.5.4.6; 4.1.11.1.

⁶ TA 1.11.2.

⁷ *saiṣā gāyattriyetasmiṁs turiye darśate pade paro-rajasi pratiṣṭhitā*. BU 5.14.4.

⁸ *nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalam pivata bhāgavatam rasam ā-layam*. 1.1.3 ac.

⁹ *yadā'tma-tattvena tu brahma-tattvaṁ dīpōpameneha yuktaḥ prapāṣyet* Śve U 2.15 ab.

comprehensive Supreme Self (*Brahman*). "What is the essence (*tattva*) of the limited soul?"—this is the question. And, the answer is: "The essence (of the limited soul) is non-dual consciousness—so declare those who have realised Truth".¹⁰ This is apparently a plain statement of Truth without any string of factional denomination although the *Bhāgavata* admits that Truth is variously described as *Brahman*, *Paramātman* and *Bhagavat*.¹¹

Indeed the *Bhāgavata* statement of Truth as non-dual consciousness is the affirmation of the *Vedic* position summed up in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* before it was submitted to the *Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad*. The *Brāhmaṇa* pays adoration¹² to the self-luminous (*darśata*) state of existence (*pada*), that stands supreme—the fourth state (*turiya*) beyond worldliness (*para-rajasa*). The *Upaniṣad*¹³ throws light upon this fourth state by taking into consideration the other three states of lower degree but having mutual hierarchy. The first state consists, according to the *Upaniṣad*, of the three worlds, the second state, of wisdom incorporated in the *Vedas*, the third state, of Life (*prāṇa*) distributed in five vital airs and the fourth state, of that which glows over all. The *Upaniṣad* identifies the four metrical feet of the *Sāvitrī-Mantra* (quoted above)—so called because it consists of the invocation of *Savitṛ*—with the four *padas* (states of existence) brought in by the *Upaniṣad* for the purpose of the exposition of the supreme, the fourth state of existence. As the *Bṛhadāranyaka* is a direct descendant of the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, the trend of thought, glimpsed both in the *Brāhmaṇa* and in the *Upaniṣad*, is highly suggestive. It suggests, for instance, that philosophical speculations had a long and important course of development through the *Vedic* literature round the concept

¹⁰ *jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā*. 1.2.10 c.

vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaṃ yaj jñānam advayam. 1.2.11 ab.

¹¹ *brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate*. 1.2.11 cd.

¹² *namas te turīyāya darśatāya padāya paro-rajase asau 'ado mā prāpat*.
SB 14.8.15.10.

¹³ BU 5.14.1-7 especially the following:—*sa ya imāṃs trīn lokān pūrṇān prati-grhṇīyāt so'sya prathamam padam āpnuyāt. atha yāvatiyaṃ trayi vidyā yas tāvat prati-grhṇīyāt so'syā etad dūtiyaṃ padam āpnuyāt. atha yāvad idam prāṇi yas tāvat prati-grhṇīyāt so'sya etat tṛtiyaṃ padam āpnuyāt. athāsya etad eva turīyaṃ darśataṃ padam paro-rajā ya eja tapati, naiva kenacana'pyam kuta u etāvat prati-grhṇīyāt*. *ibid.* 6.

of *Savitṛ* or *Viṣṇu* considered as the supreme state of existence (*turīya pada*), allowing, for the clear perspective of this fourth state of existence, the consideration of the other three *padas* as well. From such philosophical speculations finally emerged Reality as non-dual consciousness described, as the *Bhāgavata* says, by different terms—*Brahman*, *Paramātman* and *Bhagavat*. It is worthwhile therefore to trace the landmarks of this ontological evolution recorded in the *Bhāgavata* in its finished form. For this purpose, we now know where to go. We have to look beyond the *Śatapatha-Bṛāhmaṇa* to the earliest available source, the *Ṛg-Veda*. We shall then follow up the steps through the *Upaniṣads* before the final stage found entrance in the *Bhāgavata*.

The riddle of creation has always engaged the attention of man. Whence had the world come? As early as the *Ṛg-Veda* this question has found expression in what is known as the *Nāsadīya-Sūkta*¹⁴ believed to be "the most important in the history of the philosophy of India",¹⁵ "the finest effort of the imagination of the *Vedic* poet" and "nothing else equals it".¹⁶ The intellectual enquiry discards the possibility of any worldly object to pre-exist creation, because that apparently involves an inherent contradiction. How could a phenomenon pre-exist its own self? The enquiry then comes upon One that, endowed with its own power (*Sva-dhā*), breathed (*ānīt*) without breath (*a-vātam*).¹⁷ But scepticism has no resting place. It admits that intuitive vision (*manīṣā*) can definitely realise the ground (*bandhu*) of all truths (*sat*) in the heart of man (*hṛdī*).¹⁸ Nevertheless scepticism by itself ends in despair, losing its way in the labyrinth of contradictions. It wonders at last if the Master (*Viṣṇu*) of creation (*asya adhyakṣaḥ*) who lives in "high heaven" (*parama vyoman*) knows the secret of it.¹⁹

¹⁴ RV 10.129.

¹⁵ Keith RPVU, p. 435.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 437.

¹⁷ *ānīd a-vātaṁ svadhayā tad ekam
tasmād dhānyan na paraḥ kimcānā'sa* RV 10.129.2cd.

¹⁸ *sato bandhum asati nir-avindan
hṛdī pratiṣṭhā kavayo manīṣā.* *ibid.* 4ab.

¹⁹ *yo asyā'dhyakṣaḥ parama vyoman
t-so aṅga veda yadi vā na veda.* *ibid.* 7cd.

But this *Sūkta* need not be interpreted as inconclusive. It merely suggests the inadequacy of intellectual enquiry as it advocates spiritual vision on the ground of its freedom from the shadow of doubt. The conclusions that such an enquiry yields are however unmistakable: (1) Reality is pure being (*sato bandhum*) revealed in the heart of man; (2) It is One; (3) It is the living reality; (4) It is reposed on its own power (*Sva-dhā*) and (5) the Master in high heaven knows the mystery of creation.

The non-dual nature of Truth that pulsates beyond creation made Viṣṇu identical with such Truth because non-duality cannot allow the duality of the knower and the known. If Viṣṇu knew the truth He was no other than Truth itself. In later literature e.g., in the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*²⁰ it is therefore stated that he who knows *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*. For the same reason i.e., uncompromising non-duality, the high heaven of Viṣṇu, leaving its literal sense of "abode" came to mean the very nature of Viṣṇu. The elaboration of the concept of Truth thus clung to the evolution of the Viṣṇu concept, with special reference to the "*parama pada*" of Viṣṇu. In the *Rg-Veda* the development of the concept is as follows:—The seers can visualise all the time the "*parama pada*" of Viṣṇu, appearing like an eye in heaven.²¹ It is glowing with lustre (*ava-bhāti*) infinitely (*bhūri*) and it possesses the perennial source of honey. It can also be viewed as three (*trī padāni*), all full of honey, eternal (*a-kṣīyamānā*) and thriving with native power (*Sva-dhā*).²²

The combination of the ideas of the cosmogonic hymn, stated above, together with these Viṣṇu hymns would yield the following results:—(1) Truth is pure being, (2) It is One but can be viewed as three and (3) whether viewed as One or three, it is eternal, self-luminous and all bliss. Such a position has naturally paved the way to the concept of Truth as *sat*

²⁰ *sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati.*
Mun U 3.2.9.

²¹ *tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam*
sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ
divya cakṣur ātatam RV 1.22.20.

²² *paramam padam avabhāti bhūri*
viṣṇoḥ parama pade madhva utsaḥ
yasya trī pūrṇā madhunā padāni
akṣīyamānā svadhayā madanti RV 1.154. 6, 5, 4.

{eternal), *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss).

But Truth exposed so far is unrelated to creation. In fact, we have so far glimpsed the elaboration of the great Viṣṇu in terms of his three strides (*pada*), who is left to the mere witnessing of creation. The great sun, from three well-marked positions in the sky—the eastern horizon, the centre and the western horizon—is here found to watch creation below. From the philosophical point of view, Reality is presented in three forms, all of which have transcended creation. But Reality cannot be left thus to its isolation. Being the primordial principle of life and eternally charged with its innate power, as the cosmogonic hymn would lead us to believe, it must saturate the universe with its being. This completing nature of Reality is visualized in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of the *Rg-Veda*. "The universe is *Puruṣa*," declares the *Sūkta*, "but He is not exhausted herein. He has transcended the universe as well. Creation in its entirety is but His one '*pāda*'; His other three '*pādas*'—all of them eternal—are in heaven, transcending creation".²³ The *Puruṣa-Sūkta* thus envisages four '*pādas*' of Reality—one immanent and three transcendent. This provides the highest possible expansion of Viṣṇu, the all-embracing and all-pervasive Reality. At the time of the *Rg-Veda*, then, Reality was conceived to consist in four '*pādas*' of which one is immanent and the others transcendent. But the notion of immanence and transcendence carried with it the germ of hierarchy in spite of the non-dual character of Truth.

The Doctrine of the four "*pādas*" of Viṣṇu continued unabated during the whole period of sacrifice (*yajña-yuga*). The three strides (*pādas*) of Viṣṇu overarched the milieu of sacrifice. They pervaded the three worlds—earth, air and heaven—and the sacrificer imitated them in the ritual to ensure heaven for himself.²⁴ As sacrifice, duly performed, branched off into the creation of the three worlds for the enjoyment of the sacrificer,

²³ *puruṣa evedaṁ sarvaṁ
ato jyāyāṁś ca pūruṣaḥ
pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni
tri-pād asyā'mṛtaṁ divi
tripād ūrdhva udait puruṣaḥ
pādo'syehābhavat punaḥ* RV 10.90.2, 3, 4.

²⁴ TS I. p. cxxvii, edn. Keith.

sacrifice itself could be regarded as the condensed form of the three worlds. And, as Viṣṇu was already identified with the universe (so we have noticed in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*), He was naturally looked upon as sacrifice itself.²⁵ In the concept of sacrifice the immanent form of Viṣṇu, consisting in the three worlds, may be said to have attained for the first time a unity of thought. Viṣṇu now stood for the whole universe with its bewildering multiplicity in so far as He was sacrifice itself that provided for the germ of the universe. This was then the immanent "*pada*" of Viṣṇu besides the three others, already referred to, as overarching the sacrifice. In this way Viṣṇu with four "*padas*" ruled the domain of sacrificial cult incorporated in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature.

The individuality of this immanent form of Viṣṇu was firmly established in the *Upaniṣads*. The question of the origin of the universe, that had originally troubled Prajāpati-Paramēsthin, the seer of the *Nāśadiya-Sūkta* referred to before, appears again and again in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*. The first principle of the *Nāśadiya-Sūkta*, that breathed without breath, gradually assumed the name of "*Ātman*" which also is derived from the root "*an*" (to breathe). As early as the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*,²⁶ *Ātman* was conceived to fly into all for shelter and was thus called "*Puruṣa*". And, in so far as the first principle with the aid of its native power (*Sva-dhā*) burst, as it were, into the details of creation like a spider bringing forth its cobweb or fire bursting into sparks, it also acquired the designation of *Brahman*.²⁷ The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* proposes in turn all the three terms—*Ātman*, *Puruṣa* and *Brahman*—to describe the first principle before creation.²⁸ But the doubt raised in the *Nāśadiya-Sūkta* as to the exact nature of the first principle does still seem to linger in this *Upaniṣad*. The *Upaniṣad*, for instance,

²⁵ *yajño vai viṣṇuḥ* SB 1.4.1.3.

²⁶ *puraś cakre dvi-padaḥ*

puraś cakre catuṣ-padaḥ

puraḥ sa pakṣi bhūtva

puraḥ puruṣa āviśat ŚB 14.5.5.18, quoted in BU 2.5.18.

²⁷ *sa yathorṇanābhis tantunocared yathā'gneḥ kṣudrā visphuliṅgā vyuccarantīyevam evā'smād ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve devā sarvāṇi bhūtāni vyuccaranti* BU 2.1.20.

²⁸ *atmaivedam agra āsit puruṣa-vidhaḥ. brahma vā idam agra āsit*
BU 1.4.1, 10.

echoes the view of the *Sūkta* when it says that at the outset there was nothing.²⁹ But it also posits the existence of *Brahman* before creation.³⁰ It further tries to resolve the contradiction between these two views by saying that being One at the outset *Brahman* felt itself to be non-existent.³¹ The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* takes a much bolder stand on this issue. It rules out the possibility of the negative character of the *first principle* and affirms once for all that Reality is positive, One without a second.³² In the *Sūkta*, Reality was pure being in the inner consciousness of man; it was now established to be so even in intellectual apprehension. The *Upaniṣad* asserts Reality as positive and thus finally puts an end to the doubt as to its nature. But the *Chāndogya*'s assertion of *being* in Reality marks an important departure from the same concept in the *Sūkta*. It is the *being* of Reality intimately related to creation, as distinguished from the *being* of Reality before creation. In other words, we have now both the immanent and transcendent *being* of Reality, if the view of the *Sūkta* and that of the *Chāndogya* are allowed to converge.

Besides the being or existence which is now sought to be established on logical basis, the other aspects of Reality viz, consciousness and bliss, obtained as a heritage from the *Ṛg-Veda*, find the same type of confirmation. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* asserts that *Brahman* is consciousness and bliss.³³ The *Upaniṣad* adduces arguments to establish these two aspects but they are too long to be reproduced in this context. The *Chāndogya* also argues in the same vein.³⁴ The result of such speculations is to assert the nature of Truth in definite categories: Truth is being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*). If, on the other hand, we take into consideration the innate power (*Sva-dhā*) of Reality, due to which *Brahman* bursts into in-

²⁹ *naiveha kimcanā'gra āsit.* *ibid.* 1.2.1.

³⁰ *brahma vā idam agra āsit.* *ibid.* 1.4.10

³¹ *tad ekam san na vyabhavat.* *ibid.* 1.4.11.

³² *sad eva somyedam agra āsid ekam evā'dvītiyam. taddhaika āhur asad evedam agra āsid ekam evā'dvītiyam; tasmād asatoḥ saj jāyata. kutas tu khalu somyaivam syād iti hovāca. katham asatoḥ saj jāyeta. sattveva somyedam agra āsid ekam evā'dvītiyam.* ChU 6.2.1-2.

³³ *vijñānam ānandam brahma* BU 3.9.18.7.

³⁴ *vide* BU 4.3.23-30, 4.3.32-33; ChU 7.13.1 etc.

finite details, Reality with such power may legitimately be described as "*ananta*" (infinite). This gives rise to another description of Reality, recorded in the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*:³⁵ *Brahman* is truth, consciousness and infinite.

We have seen that *Ātman* is called "*Puruṣa*" because it entered "*pura*", the composite body. Although the *Chāndogya*, for instance, is aware that *Ātman* is the all-embracing reality,³⁶ yet the association of *Ātman* with the composite body gradually resulted in the usage of the term in relation to the body. The *Nāsadiya-Sūkta*'s discovery of the first principle in the heart of man had thus acquired a new significance in relation to the physical body³⁷ that encased mind as well. *Ātman* and *Puruṣa* being confined to the individual body, *Brahman*—the only one left of the three terms—signified Reality behind the physical universe. In this way arose the view that the *Upaniṣads* preached the doctrine of *Brahman*. Nevertheless the *Upaniṣads* reasserted the fundamental unity between *Ātman*, encased in a particular body, and *Brahman*. But in so far as *Ātman* was now a definite particular such unity found expression in the statement—*ayam ātmā Brahma*—this soul is *Brahman*.³⁸ The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* equates the knowledge of *Brahman* with that of "I" (*Ātman*) and this "I" is a particular because whoever among the gods had obtained this realisation—'*I am Brahman*'—became *Brahman*.³⁹

The fundamental unity between the individual soul and *Brahman* was now sought to be reached by a different method—the process of intellectual analysis of the nature of the individual soul. The individual soul, according to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, has two states of existence (*sthāna*)—this world and the other world. It may also have a third state intermediate between the two. This is the world of dream.⁴⁰ But this world of dream

³⁵ *satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma* TU 2.1.1.

³⁶ *ātmaivā'dhastāt ātmopariṣṭāt etc.* ChU 7.25.2.

³⁷ *sa vā eṣa ātmā hṛdi* ChU 8.3.3.

³⁸ *ayam ātmā brahma* MānU 2.

³⁹ *ahaṁ brahmāsmi. tasmāt tat sarvaṁ abhavat. tad yo yo devānāṁ pratyabudhyata sa eva tad abhavat tatharṣiṇāṁ tathā manuṣyānāṁ*

BU 1.4.10.

⁴⁰ *etasya vā puruṣasya dve eva sthāne bhavata, idaṁ ca para-loka-sthānaṁ ca. sandhyāṁ tṛtīyāṁ swapna-sthānaṁ* BU 4.3.9.

need not be taken separately. It is but the representation of the world of waking.⁴¹ As the individual soul travels through this world and the World beyond, it must be taken as unrelated to both. The *Chāndogya* points out⁴² that the unrelated nature of the individual soul is definitely apprehended in the state of “*samprasāda*”—dreamless sleep—when the individual soul transcends its physical limitation and realises its identity with *Brahman*. The term “*satya*” (truth) embodies this identity because it literally signifies the existence of the individual soul in *Brahman* (*sati ayam iti*).⁴³

The analysis of the nature of the individual soul reaches a high degree of perfection in the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*. The *Māṇḍūkya* begins with a couple of equations:—(1) The entire universe is *Brahman* and (2) *This* soul is *Brahman*. These equations suggest that by the time of the *Māṇḍūkya* the usage of the term “*Brahman*” in relation to the physical universe and that of the term “*Ātman*” in relation to the individual soul had become well established. The *Māṇḍūkya* then launches upon an enquiry into the nature of the individual soul in order to realise the implication of the identity between the individual soul and *Brahman*. The *Upaniṣad* propounds for the first time the theory of the four states of existence (*catuṣ-pāda*) for the individual soul—the waking state, dream, dreamless sleep and the fourth state. The waking state is characterised by external knowledge of this world (*bahih-prajña*). Marked by this state, the individual soul is called the first “*pāda*”. Dream is the state of mere consciousness having no correspondence to any objective reality (*antaḥ-prajña*). The soul in dream is the second “*pāda*”. Dreamless sleep resolves plurality into the consciousness of happiness. That makes the individual soul the third “*pāda*”. But the individual soul transcends all these three states to the fourth state where the turmoils of worldliness are silenced (*prapañcōpaśama*). It is the state of sublime tranquillity (*śānta*) and auspicious (*śiva*) non-duality (*advaita*),

⁴¹ *atho khalvāhur jāgarita-deśa evāsyaiṣa iti. ibid. 4.3.14.*

⁴² *atha ya eṣa samprasādo'smāc charirāt samutthāya param jyotir upa-sampadya svena rūpeṇa abhiniṣpadyate eṣa ātmeti hovāca etad amṛtam abhayaṃ etad brahma iti ChU 8.3.4.*

⁴³ *tāni ha vā etāni trīṇyākṣarāṇi satiyam iti. ChU 8.3.5.*

perpetually reposed on self-realisation (*ātma-pratyaya-sāra*). This fourth state consists in the true nature of the soul.⁴⁴ The analysis of the individual soul thus ends in self-realisation—the knowledge of identity between the individual and the cosmic soul, finally resolving into the consciousness of the soul *per se*, unsoiled by any worldly reference, individualistic or cosmic.

The contributions of the *Māṇḍūkya* may be summed up as follows:—(1) “*ayam ātmā*” i.e., the empirical soul consists in four “*pādas*”; (2) these “*pādas*” are *jāgrat* (waking state), *svapna* (dream), *suṣupti* (dreamless sleep) and *turiya* (the fourth, transcendental state); (3) these “*pādas*” are to be conceived in hierarchical order and (4) consciousness is common to all the “*pādas*”; yet, they vary from one another in that the first “*pāda*” is given to the physical world, the second “*pāda*” is marked by the predominance of knowledge, the third “*pāda*” is conspicuously blissful, while the fourth “*pāda*” is non-dual.

The value of these contributions may be appreciated if we recall the ideas that were in the making, round the concept of Reality, in the *Vedas*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the early *Upaniṣads*. The *Vedas* had given the concept of Reality as consisting in four “*pādas*”, one immanent and three transcendent. The *Brāhmaṇas* accepted the three “*pādas*” to supervene sacrifice and identified the immanent “*pāda*” with sacrifice itself. While importing *Ātman*, *Puruṣa* and *Brahman* to explain the origin of creation, the early *Upaniṣads* gradually expressed the trend of relegating *Ātman* and *Puruṣa* to the status of the individual soul confined to a particular body and of holding up *Brahman* as the world principle. It was, as it were, a bifurcation of the same principle into *Jiva* and *Brahman* in the mind of the *Upaniṣadic* thinkers, in their desire to explain certain

⁴⁴ *sarvaṁ hyetad brahmā'yam ātmā brahma, so'yam ātmā catuṣpād, jāgarita-sthāno bahiḥ-prajñāḥ saptaṅga ekona-vimśati-mukhaḥ sthūla-bhūg vaiśvānaraḥ prathamāḥ pādaḥ. svapna-sthāno'ntaḥ-prajñāḥ saptaṅga ekona-vimśati-mukhaḥ pravivikta-bhūk taijasa dvitīyāḥ pādaḥ. yatra supto na kañcana kāmaṁ kāmayate na kañcana svapnaṁ paśyati tat suṣuptam. suṣupta-sthāna ekibhūtaḥ prajñāna-ghana eva'nandamayo hyānanda-bhūk cetomukhaḥ prajñāḥ tṛtīyāḥ pādaḥ. nāntaḥ-prajñāṁ na bahiḥ-prajñāṁ nobhaya-taḥ-prajñāṁ na prajñā-ghanam na prajñāṁ na'prajñāṁ. adṛśyam avyavahāryam agrāhyam a-lakṣaṇam a-cintyam a-vyapadeśyam ekātma-pratyaya-sāraṁ prapañcōpaśamaṁ śāntaṁ śivam advaitam caturthaṁ nanyante; sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ* MānU 2-5, 6, 7.

practical problems connected with creation, such as bondage and liberation. Nevertheless the basic identity between *Jiva* and *Brahman* was never lost sight of. This the *Upaniṣads* have asserted whenever they have the opportunity to do so. With the rise of *Brahman* as the world principle in the *Upaniṣads*, the four *pādas* which were originally associated with Viṣṇu, became linked up with *Brahman*⁴⁵ although *Brahman* itself could still be recognizable as the sun, the prototype of Viṣṇu.⁴⁶ The *Māṇḍūkya* preached a novel theory by assigning four *pādas* to the individual soul (*Jiva*). And, when it asserted the identity between *Jiva* and *Brahman* it provided the clue to rehabilitation of ideas associated both with the first principle and the individual soul, resulting in a grand synthesis represented in the concept of *catuṣ-pāda Brahman* of the *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*. The philosophy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* may be said to have been laid against the bed-rock of the wealth of ideas incorporated in this *Upaniṣad*.

The *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad* begins with a sum up of the old position before exposing its own view: *Brahman* is the Reality, ineffable in all the three times—past, present and future. It embodies the world and yet it transcends all phenomenal existence. It is being, consciousness, all-bliss and self-luminous. It is free from all conditions, self-contented, one, non-dual and the fourth state. Though inscrutable *per se* it is symbolised by *praṇava*. The *Upaniṣad* then gives its own view: *Brahman* (as described above) consists in four *pādas*.⁴⁷ But the *Upaniṣad* offers the admonition that the mention of *pādas* i.e., grades of Reality should not be construed as referring to internal differences in *Brahman* because *Brahman* by itself is non-dual and so it does not allow any kind of difference. The mention of grades is really intended to probe into the depths of *Brahman*.⁴⁸ So the treatment of

⁴⁵ *tad etad catuṣ-pād brahma* ChU 3.18.2.

⁴⁶ *ādityo brahmetyādesaḥ*. *ibid.* 3.19.1.

⁴⁷ *katham brahma? kala-traya'bādhitaṁ brahma.... sac-cid-ānanda-svapra-kāśaṁ brahma... turyaṁ nirākāraṁ ekaṁ brahma. a-dvaitaṁ a-nirvācyaṁ brahma. praṇava'tmakam brahma... pāda-catuṣṭaya'tmakam brahma* MahāU 1.5.

⁴⁸ *brahma-bhedo na kathitaḥ. brahma-vyatiriktaṁ na kimcid asti. pāda-bhedā'di-kathanam tu brahma-svarūpa-kathanam eva.* *ibid.* 4.3.

Brahman by the *Upaniṣad* aims at a more thorough exposition of the nature of *Brahman*, the supreme reality of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

The four grades of *Brahman* are *Avidyā-pāda*, *Vidyā-pāda*, *Ānanda-pāda* and *Turiya-pāda*, in hierarchical order. Of these, *Mūlā'vidyā* that accounts for pragmatic existence belongs exclusively to the first grade, the *Avidyā-pāda*. But consciousness, bliss and transcendence which predominantly belong to *Vidyā-pāda*, *Ānanda-pāda* and *Turiya-pāda* respectively are common to all the grades.⁴⁹ This is so because all the four grades are in fact one Reality and the conception of its division into grades is just to emphasise a specific aspect—existence, consciousness, bliss or transcendence. Being associated with *Avidyā*, Reality as marked by bare existence, stands lowest in the order. The upper grades of pure knowledge and pure bliss are said to be immortal (*amṛta*). In other words, the first grade is phenomenal while the other three are noumenal. Evidently the *Upaniṣad* is invoking here the idea of immanence and transcendence of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. While Reality characterised by existence is now being confined to represent the immanent aspect, the threefold transcendental of the said *Sūkta* is reorganised here as consciousness, bliss and the transcendental, the last of which seems to be a borrow from the *turiya*-concept of the *Māṇḍūkya*. But as even the first grade is transcendental, the fourth grade has to be recognised, as has been done by the *Upaniṣad*, as the transcendental of the transcendental (*turiya-turiya*) or supra-transcendental (*turiyā'tīta*). Similarly the definition of the second grade as consciousness and of the third grade as bliss and their mutual hierarchy are based upon the *Māṇḍūkya* conception of the second *pāda* and the third *pāda*—the state of consciousness in dream and the state of happiness in dreamless sleep—of which the latter supersedes the former as evinced in the ordinary life of the empirical soul.

In the exposition of the hierarchical grades of *Brahman* the *Upaniṣad* has brilliantly exploited the concept of *Sva-dhā*,

* *katham pāda-catustayasya bhedaḥ? avidyā-pādaḥ prathamah pādaḥ; vidyā-pādo dvitīyah; ānanda-pādas tṛtīyah; turiya-pādas turiya iti. Mūlā'vidyā prathama-pāde nā'nyatra. vidyā'nanda-turiya'mśāḥ sarveṣu padeṣu vyāpya tiṣṭhanti. ibid. 1.8, 9.*

the innate power of the *first principle*. We have seen that the *Rg-Veda* has attributed the grandeur of ecstasy present in the three transcendental *pādas* of Viṣṇu to this innate power (*svadhayā madanti*). The second grade of *Brahman*, characterised by pure consciousness, is said to possess its innate power under the name *Mahā-māyā*.⁵⁰ Similarly, the innate power corresponding to the third grade of *Brahman*, marked by pure bliss, is called *Mahā-yoga-māyā*. Lastly, the innate power of *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality presented as pure existence, is called *Māyā* or *Mūlā'vidyā*. *Mahā-māyā* is stated to be a *vilāsa* (manifestation) of *Mahā-yoga-māyā*⁵¹ as *Māyā* is stated to be so of *Mahā-māyā*.⁵² This means that all the three powers are *one* in substance; but, in response to the first three grades of Reality, it is conceived to be threefold as an explanation for variation among the grades.

It is the nature of the innate power of Reality to give rise to plurality (*prapañca*) whether it works as a transcendental power as in the case of *Mahā-māyā* or *Mahā-yoga-māyā*, or as the immanent power i.e., *Māyā*. But there is a fundamental difference between the two types of plurality. The plurality unfolded by a transcendental power partakes of the character of eternal bliss and eternal consciousness while the plurality brought about by *Māyā* is only transitory. In fact, the world of *Māyā*, being just a *vilāsa* of *Mahā-māyā*, is without substance; and so, one has to fall back upon the transcendental aspect of Reality, marked by non-duality.⁵³

Mahā-māyā provides body for *Ādi-Viṣṇu*, the second grade of Reality, as it creates a wonderful noumenal world called *Vaikuṇṭha*. *Vaikuṇṭha* shines like a continuous glide

⁵⁰ *tat (ādi-nārāyaṇa)-saṃkalpānusārīṇi vividhānanta-mahāmāyā etāṃ mahā-māyāṃ tarantyeva ye viṣṇum eva bhajanti* ibid. 4.13.

⁵¹ *vaiṣṇavī mahā-yoga-māyā mūrtimadbhir ananta-mahā-māyā-jāla-viśeṣaiḥ pariśevitā. tasyāḥ puram ati-kautukam atyāścarya-sāgarā'nanda-lakṣaṇam amṛtaṃ bhavati* ibid. 6.16.

⁵² *saṅkoca-vikāśā'tmaka-mahā-māyā-vilāśā'tmaka eva sarvo'pyavidyā-prapañcaḥ* ibid. 3.2.

⁵³ *pranañco'pi dvividhaḥ: vidyā-prapañcaś cā'vidyā-prapañcaś ca iti. vidyā-prapañcasya nityatvaṃ siddham eva nityānanda-cid-vilāśātmakatvāt; atha ca buddha-buddha-mukta-satyānanda-svarūpatvāt ca. avidyā-prapañcasya a-nityatvaṃ vadanti . . . paramārthato na kiñcid asti kṣaṇa-lūṇyā'nādi-mūlā'vidyā-vilāsatvāt* ibid. 3.2.

(*pravāha*) of lustre (*tejas*) with *Ādi-Viṣṇu* at its centre. The body, lustre and Viṣṇu are all *one*—the *parama pada* of Viṣṇu.⁵⁴ Similar is the case with *Mahā-yoga-māyā*. It unfolds itself as the body of the third grade, *Mahā-Viṣṇu*, and also, as his abode—the *Mahā-Vaikunṭha*. Yet all the three are *one*. The plurality of forms (*ākāras*) thus exhibited in the cases of the second and the third grades of Reality are not opposed to formlessness of Reality because such forms, being of noumenal nature, are in no way contradictory to non-duality.⁵⁵ As the oneness of pure gold remains unaffected in spite of its transformation into various ornaments, or as water of the ocean maintains its original character although it is distributed into waves, ripples, foams and the like, or as earth remains one in spite of its diversification into mountains, trees, creepers and so on, so *Brahman* remains permanently settled on its non-duality in spite of the diversity brought about by *Mahā-māyā* and *Mahā-yoga-māyā*.⁵⁶

The *Upaniṣad* describes the process of the emergence of plurality from *Mūlā'vidyā* as follows:—By the sweet will (*svicchā*) of *Ādi-Nārāyaṇa*, i.e., the second grade of Reality, appears His *unmeṣa*, a conscious tendency of externalisation.⁵⁷ This *unmeṣa* stimulates the rise of *Avyakta* (the unmanifest) in the first grade of Reality, the primordial source of all creations. Gradually this *Avyakta* solidifies itself into *Māyā* (*mūla*) and its effects (*Avidyā*). Characterised by *Mūlā'vidyā*, *Brahman*—the pure existence (i.e., the first grade of Reality)—is ripe for creation. Then the categories, *Mahat* etc., appear one after and from

⁵⁴ *tatra madhyama-pāda-madhya-pradeśe'mita-tejah-pravāhākārataya nitya-vaikunṭham vibhāti. tat ca nir-atīṣayānandākhaṇḍa-brahmānandanīja-mūrtiyākāreṇa jvalati . . . vaiṣṇava-dīpya-tejo-rāṣyantargata-vilasanmahā-viṣṇoḥ paramam padam virājate. ibid. 1.11.*

⁵⁵ *vidyā-prādhānyenena vidyā-sākārah. ānanda-prādhānyenānanda-sākārah. . . prādhānyenā'tra bheda eva bhedaḥ. vastutas tu abheda eva. . . yathā sarva-gatasya nir-ākārasya mahā-vāyoḥ, ca tad-ātmakasya tvak-patitvena prasiddhasya sākārasya mahā-vāyu-devasya cābheda eva śrūyate sarvatra . . . tad-vat parabrahmaṇaḥ sārvaत्मikasya sākāra-nir-ākāra-bheda-virodho nāstyeva. ibid. 2.10.12.*

⁵⁶ *yathā buddha-suvarṇasya kaṭaka-makuṭā'ṅga-dādi-bhedaḥ, yathā samudra-salilasya sthūla-sūkṣma-taraṅga-phena-budbudā dyanantavastubhedaḥ, tathāivādvaita-paramānanda-lakṣaṇa-pāra-brahmaṇo mama sarvādvaitam upapannam bhavatyeva. . . ibid. 8.2.*

⁵⁷ *pārag-dṛṣṭir unmeṣaḥ. pratyag-dṛṣṭir nimeṣaḥ. ibid. 4.12.*

the other. From the five gross elements emerges, then, a cosmic mass (*aṇḍa*) out of which eventually the physical world is brought into being.³⁸

The conception of Reality, presented by the *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad* is a great development of Viṣṇu from His naturalistic origin, the sun. The sun gradually assumed the status of Viṣṇu because it pervades the vast expanse of the sky. From the farthest end of the eastern horizon it steadily rises to the top and then declines to the west until it reaches the farthest end of the western horizon. The sun with its three conspicuous positions had naturally pervaded the mental sky of the *Ṛg-Vedic* seers, as Viṣṇu with his three strides (*pada*). Away from the earth Viṣṇu shone in high heaven with his three strides. The *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* had discovered the great Personality (*mahāntam puruṣam*) glowing as the sun beyond the realm of darkness.³⁹ The *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad* allows freely the play of its religious imagination against this new conception of the *Saṁhitā*. The great Personality in order to be *Puruṣa* has to have a *pura* (abode). The solar character of the Personality has also to be maintained. All this was made possible by elaboration of the *Sva-dhā*-concept. The metaphysical demands of non-duality were also met by resolving the plurality of *Sva-dhā* into the non-duality of the Absolute. But in spite of this unique development, the *Upaniṣad* chose to adhere to the past. *Puruṣa* was Viṣṇu or *Ādi-Viṣṇu* or *Ādi-Nārāyaṇa*, the second grade of Reality. The third grade, being higher than the second, was *Mahā-Viṣṇu*. Similarly abode of *Ādi-Nārāyaṇa* was *Vaikunṭha*, being free from all pragmatic limitations (*kunṭhā*). So the abode of *Mahā-Viṣṇu*, the third grade, was to be *Mahā-Vaikunṭha*. The *Upaniṣad* thus unravels a very important chapter of the evolution of *Vaiṣṇavism* under the aegis of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

³⁸ *ādī'nārāyaṇasya svecchā'nusāreṇa unmeṣo jāyate. tasmāt param brahmaṇo'dhastana-pāde sarva-kāraṇe mūla-kāraṇā'vyaktā'virbhāvo bhavati. avyaktān mūlā'vir-bhāvo mūlā'vidyā'vir-bhāvaś ca. tasmād eva sac-chabda-vācyam brahmā'vidyā-sabalaṁ bhavati. tato mahat. mahato'hamākāraḥ. ahamākārāt pañca-tanmātrāṇi. pañca-tanmātrebhyo pañca-mahā-bhūtāni. pañca-mahā-bhūtebhyo brahmaikapādaṁ vyāptam avidyā'ṇḍam jāyate. ibid. 2.14.*

³⁹ *vedā'ham etaṁ puruṣam mahāntam āditya-varṇam tamasā parastāt VS 31.18.*

bliss, the supreme *Puruṣa*. Creation started when that existence became associated with *Avyakta*. *Avyakta* was first manifested as *Mahat*, that gave rise to *Manas*, that to the organs. Out of *Mahat* emerged the five elements as well. Or, we might say, on the basis of the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*,⁶⁸ that the organs were born of the five elements. Heaven and earth together with the intermediate space (*antarikṣa*) are the outcome of the five elements.

The *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad* recognises *Avyakta* to be the first material impetus for creation. *Avyakta*, according to the *Upaniṣad*, evolves into *Māyā* and that into its effects. Among the effects the first to rise is *Mahat*. But the *Upaniṣad* introduces a variation from the older *Upaniṣads* by recognizing *Ahaṁkāra* to emerge from *Mahat*, instead of *Manas*. From *Ahaṁkāra* five subtle elements are said to have been born and out of the latter the five gross elements. The cosmic egg is said to be the product of these five gross elements. The *Upaniṣad* therefore is not only important in respect of its contribution in the field of noumenal elaboration, but it deserves our attention regarding the details of the phenomenal existence as well.

We now propose to conclude the brief survey of ideas that went into the formation of the philosophy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* with a notice of the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* that appears to be important next only to the *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*. As usual, the *Upaniṣad* opens with the cosmogonic question. But it goes further. It wishes to know from the seers of *Brahman* (*brahma-vidaḥ*) as to what has enlivened us all, has served as the universal substratum and controls all.⁶⁹ The answer received is the Luminous (*deva*) endowed with His native power (*ātma-śakti*).⁷⁰ The Deity is no other than the Great

⁶⁸ *indriyebhyaḥ parā hyarthāḥ. ibid. 3.10.*

⁶⁹ *kiṁ kāraṇaṁ brahma kutaḥ sma jātā
jivāma kena kva ca sampratisthāḥ.
adhiṣṭhātāḥ kena sukhetaṛeṣu
vartāmahe brahma-vido vyavasthām. ŚU 1.1.*

⁷⁰ *te dhyāna-yogānugatā apaśyan
devātma-śaktiṁ sva-guṇair nigūḍhām.
yaḥ kāraṇāni nikhilāni tāni
kālatma-yuktānyadhitiṣṭhātṛyekaḥ. ibid. 1.3.*

Person⁷¹ of the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā*, referred to before. As the infinite being (*Brahman*) He is the substratum of all.⁷² As the integral unity (*eka*) the Deity has penetrated all beings⁷³ and has given them life.⁷⁴ The Deity further controls all beings, being unfailingly present in the heart of man.⁷⁵ Within the body, often compared with a tree, dwell a couple of *Puruṣas* like a pair of birds (*Jīva* and *Brahman*) of whom one suffers from delusion⁷⁶ while the other merely looks on.⁷⁷ Here the *Upaniṣad* invokes the *Ṛg-Veda*. The witnessing Self lives in the heart of man and controls all his activities⁷⁸ The other self becomes associated with three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—and enjoys the fruits of its own action.⁷⁹ Though self-luminous like the sun, this soul (*Jīva*) appears like the pointed tip of iron (*ārā'gra*) because of its identification with heart of very small size.⁸⁰ Being thus circumscribed by the size of the heart, such soul is described as "*amśa*", the hundredth of the hundredth fraction of the Infinite, although *per se* it is none else than the Infinite.⁸¹ Though *one* in substance, *Jīva* suffers due to *Māyā*

⁷¹ *vedā'ham etaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntaṁ*
āditya-varṇaṁ tamaśaṁ parastāt. ibid. 3.8.

⁷² *udgītaṁ etaṁ paramaṁ tu brahma*
tasmīn trayam upratīṣṭhā'kṣaraṁ ca. ibid. 1.7.

⁷³ *eko devaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ.* ibid. 6.11.

⁷⁴ *nītyo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānāṁ.* ibid. 6.13.

⁷⁵ *eko vāṁ nīṣ-kriyānāṁ bahūnāṁ*
ekarṇaṁ bījāṁ bahudhā yaḥ karoti.
tam ātma-sthaṁ ye'nupaśyanti dhirāś
tesāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ netareṣāṁ.. ibid. 6.12.

⁷⁶ *samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno'*
nīlayā śocati muhyamānaḥ. ibid. 4.7.

⁷⁷ *dvā suparṇā sa-yujā sakhāyā*
samānāṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariśvasvajāte.
tayor anyāḥ pipplāṁ svādvattya-
naśnann anyo abhicākaśīti.. ibid. 4.6 quoted from RV 1.164.20.

⁷⁸ *aṅguṣṭha-mātraḥ puruṣo'ntar-ātmā*
sadā janānāṁ hṛdaye saṁniviṣṭaḥ. ŚU 3.13.

⁷⁹ *guṇānvayo yaḥ phala-karma-kartā*
kṛtasya tasyaiva sa cōpabhoktā. ibid. 5.7.

⁸⁰ *aṅguṣṭha-mātro ravi-tulya-rūpaḥ*
saṁkalpā'hamākāra-samanvīto yaḥ.
buddher guṇa'itma-guṇena caiva
ārāgra-mātro hyaparo'pi dṛṣṭaḥ.. ibid. 5.8.

⁸¹ *vālā'gra-lata-bhāgasya latadhā kalpitasya ca.*
bhāgo jīvaḥ sa vijñeyaḥ sa cā'nantyaḥ kalpate.. ibid. 5.9.

while God controls because He is the master of it.⁸² Realisation of this oneness with the Supreme ensures salvation marked by the perpetual disappearance of *Māyā*.⁸³

One may notice here that the *Ātma-śakti* is but a paraphrasing of *Sva-dhā*, "*ātman*" standing for "*sva*" and "*śakti*" for "*dhā*". Being the natural power of the Deity, it is "*ajā*" (unborn) and as consisting in three *guṇas*—the principle of light, the principle of attachment and the principle of darkness—it is white, red and black.⁸⁴ As the immediate material cause of creation it is "*prakṛti*".⁸⁵ It is a tremendous force (*parā śakti*) working upon the individual souls and clinging by nature (*svābhāviki*) to the Supreme. As consisting of the three *guṇas*, *Prakṛti* may be described as the conglomeration of the element of knowledge (*jñāna*), the element of activity (*kriyā*) and the element of inertia (*balā*).⁸⁶

It is no wonder that such a dynamic concept of *Prakṛti* which exhibits the majesty (*mahiman*) of the Deity⁸⁷ in immanent form, should absorb the other Theories on creation which had made their rise by this time. Time (*Kāla*), nature (*Svabhāva*), destiny (*Niyati*), chance (*Yadṛcchā*), the elements (*bhūtāni*) and the cosmic soul (*Jīva*=*Hiraṇya-garbha*) were being adduced alternatively as the cause of creation.⁸⁸ But the *Upaniṣad* contends that neither individually nor collectively can they explain creation.⁸⁹ The conjunction of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* brings about the cosmic evolution. How

⁸² *asmān māyī syjate viśvam etat*
tasmīn cā'nyo māyayā saṁ-niruddhaḥ.. ibid. 4.9.

⁸³ *kṣaram pradhānam amṛtākṣaram haraḥ.*
kṣarātmanāviśate deva ekaḥ.
tasyā'bhidyānād yojanāt tattva-bhāvād
bhūyaś cā'nte viśva-māyā-nivṛttiḥ.. ibid. 1.10.

⁸⁴ *ajām ekām lohita-śukla-kṛṣṇām.* ibid. 4.5.

⁸⁵ *māyām tu prakṛtiṁ vidyān māyinaṁ tu mahesvaram.* ibid. 4.10.

⁸⁶ *parā'sya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate*
svābhāviki jñāna-bala-kriyā ca.. ibid. 6.8.

⁸⁷ *svabhāvam eke kavayo vadanti*
kālaṁ tathā'nye parimuhyamānāḥ.
devasyaiṣa mahimā tu loke
yenedaṁ bhrāmyate brahma-cakram.. ibid. 6.1.

⁸⁸ *kālaḥ svabhāvo niyatir yadṛcchā*
bhūtāni yonih puruṣa iti cintyā. ibid 1.2.

⁸⁹ *saṁ-yoga eṣāṁ na tvātma-bhāvād*
ātmāpyanīṣaḥ sukha-duḥkha-hetoḥ.. ibid. 1.3.

can such conjunction happen without the intervention of a conscious agent?⁹⁰ Even the cosmic soul is unable to do it. After all, even the cosmic soul is a creation⁹¹ although it might have the dignity of being the first product⁹² and also the first to receive the gift of knowledge from God⁹³. Out of Hiranya-garbha came Rudra, the former being the first to be born; and then, Rudra was the source of all the gods,⁹⁴ His "Kalās".⁹⁵ Therefore, the Deity in the company of His natural power must be recognised to be the origin of creation. *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and so on are but the different forms of His natural power.

Wisdom (*Vidyā*) and ignorance (*Avidyā*) lead to salvation and worldliness respectively. But both are powers that inhere in the Deity who is other than both.⁹⁶ Wisdom consists in the discovery that creation, the individual soul (*Jīva*) and the inner controller (God)—all the three—merge into the essence of *Brahman*, the Infinite.⁹⁷

The wealth of ideas, glistening through the *Vedas*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads* may be brought to bear upon the philosophy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. The supreme Truth of the *Bhāgavata*, as we have already noticed, is non-dual consciousness. It can now be identified as the transcendental state of existence (*turiya pada*) of the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, the supra-transcendental (*turiya-turiya*) of the *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*, the auspicious (*śiva*) non-duality (*advaita*) consisting in the grand consciousness of the supreme

⁹⁰ *ādih sa sam-yoga-nimitta-hetuḥ* ibid. 6.5.

⁹¹ *hiranya-garbham paśyata jāyamānam* ibid. 4.12.

⁹² *hiranya-garbham janayāmāsa pūrvam* ibid. 3.4 vide also 6.18.

⁹³ *ṛṣiṁ prasūtaṁ kapilam yas tam agre jñānair bibharti jāyamānam ca paśyet.* ibid. 5.2.

⁹⁴ *yo devānām prabhavaś codbhavaś ca viśvādhipo rudro maharṣiḥ..* ibid. 4.12.

⁹⁵ *bhāva-grāhyam a-nidākhyaṁ bhavābhāva-karam jīvam. kāla-sarga-kṣaram devaṁ ye vidus te jahus tanum..* ibid. 5.14.

⁹⁶ *doe akṣare brahma-pare tvanante vidyā'vidye nihite yatra gūḍhe. kṣaram tvauidyā-hyamtaṁ tu vidyā vidyā'vidye īṣate yas tu so'nyaḥ..* ibid. 5.1.

⁹⁷ *jñā'jñau dvāvajāviśānīśāvajā hyekā bhoktr-bhogyārtha-yuktā. anantaś cā'tmā viśva-rūpo hyakartā trayam yadā vindate brahman etat..* ibid. 1.9.

"I" (*ātma-pratyaya-sāra*), of the *Māṇḍūkya*. The supreme "I" (*aham*), declares the *Bhāgavata*, is the presupposition of all differentiations; it stays on when the complex of differentiations consisting of cause and effect (*sad-asat*) operates; and, It will continue to exist as the only residuum when that complex will draw to its close. It is the inscrutable power (*Māyā*) of this supreme "I" that plurality appears but it does not affect in the least the intrinsic nature of the supreme "I" because *Māyā* is but a mere appearance without substance.⁹⁸ The *Bhāgavata* further describes it as "tranquil (*praśānta*), eternal (*śaśvat*), free from all fears, bare consciousness, pure, the grand equipoise (*sama*), transcendental, supreme, beyond all description, not attainable by any amount of activity, free from all afflictions, infinite bliss (*ajasra sukha*). This is "*Brahman*".⁹⁹ The *Bhāgavata* admits that the Absolute does evade all attempts of delineation and therefore the safest way is to leave the Absolute to itself, by asserting that *Reality is what it is*.¹⁰⁰

The supra-transcendental being thus beyond all description the *Bhāgavata* has chosen to fall back upon three concepts—*Brahmān*, *Paramātman* and *Bhagavat*—because they can be adequately described (*śabdyate*). *Brahman*, defines the *Bhāgavata*, is the supreme light (*param jyotiḥ*) indicated by the *Vedas* and is realised in intuitive vision as *bare existence* like ether (*ākāśa*).¹⁰¹ *Brahman* provides for the origin, sustenance and destruction of the world.¹⁰² *Paramātman* is the great "I"

⁹⁸ *aham evā'sam evā'gre nā'nyad yad sad-asat-param. paścād ahaṁ yad etac ca yo'vāśiṣyeta so'smīyaham... r̥te'rthaṁ yat pratiyeta na pratiyeta cātmani tad vidyād ātmano māyāṁ yathā'bhāso yathā tamaḥ... 2.9.32-33.*

⁹⁹ *śaśvat praśāntam abhayaṁ pratibodha-mātram suddham samam sad-asataḥ param ātma-tattvam śabdo na yatra puru-kāraka-vān kriyārtho māyā paraityabhimukhe ca vilajjamānā tad vai padam bhagavataḥ paramasya puṁso brahmeti yad vidur ajasra-sukhaṁ viśokam... 2.7.47.*

¹⁰⁰ *rūpaṁ yat tat prāhur avyaktam ādyam brahma jyotiḥ nir-guṇam nir-vikāram. sattā-mātram nir-viśeṣam nir-īhaṁ sa tvaṁ sākṣād viṣṇur adhyātma-dīpaḥ... 10.3.24.*

¹⁰¹ *tvam hi brahma param jyotiḥ guḍham brahmaṇi vān-maye. yaṁ pātyantya-malā'tmāna ākāśam iva kevalam... 10.63.64.*

¹⁰² *yaṁ minn idaṁ yataś cedam tiṣṭhatyapyeti jāyate. mṛn-mayeṣviva mṛj-jātis tasmai te brahmaṇe namaḥ. yaṁ na spṛṣanti na vidur mano-buddhindriyāsavaḥ. anṣṭar-bahīś ca vitataṁ vyoma-van taṁ nato'smīyaham... 6.16.22-23.*

(*aham*) left in the state of *consciousness* and marked by unconscious (*avyakta*) impulse for creation¹⁰³ This transcendental Reality that eventually results in the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world, is legitimately called "*parama ātman*" because it is the original source of life.¹⁰⁴ *Paramātman* is *Brahman* in so far as it becomes involved in creation consisting in cause and effect; yet, it is the transcendental Reality left to its native consciousness.¹⁰⁵ But *Paramātman*, the all-pervasive principle of Life, is none else than *Bhagavat*, defined by the *Bhāgavata*, as pure bliss (*ānanda-mātra*) characterised by the convergence of all powers (*upapanna-samasta-śakti*).¹⁰⁶

The *Bhāgavata*, in its delineation of *Brahman*, *Paramātman* and *Bhagavat*, is evidently confirming the *Upaniṣadic* position of holding Reality as *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*—existence, knowledge and bliss. The *Bhāgavata* chooses to reiterate this nature of Reality in invoking direct experience of a cosmic progenitor, Kardama. Kardama is said to have employed his mind first to *Brahman*, the transcendental being. Then he came upon Vāsudeva (*Paramātman*), the all-knowledge (*sarvajña*) all-embracing Soul (life). Lastly he apprehended *Bhagavat*, the supreme being, the be-all and end-all of all beings. Beyond that he went (*bhāgavati gati*) that defies all description.¹⁰⁷

The basic metaphysical question that has confronted philosophers is: "*What am I?*". The questioner is aware of the com-

¹⁰³ *aham evā'sam evā'gre nā'nyat kiñcā'ntaram bahiḥ. saṁ-jñāna-mātram avyaktaṁ prasuptam iva viśvataḥ.. 6.4.47.*

¹⁰⁴ *sthityudbhava-pralaya-hetur a-hetur asya yat svapna-jāgara-susuptiṣu sad bahiḥ ca. dehendriyā'su-hṛdayāni caranti yena sañjivitāni tad avehi param narendra.. 11.3.35.*

¹⁰⁵ *sattvaṁ rajas tama iti tri-vid ekam ādau sūtram mahān aham iti pravādanti jīvam. jñāna-kriyārtha-phala-rūpatayoru-śakti brahmaiva bhāti sad asac ca tayorḥ param yat.. 11.3.37.*

¹⁰⁶ *tvaṁ pratyag-ātmani tadā bhagavatyanante ānanda-mātra upapanna-samasta-śaktau 4.11.30 ab.*

¹⁰⁷ *mano brahmaṇi yuñjāno yat tat sad-asataḥ param. nir-ahamkṛtir nir-mamaś ca nir-dvandvaḥ sama-dṛk sva-dṛk pratyak-prasānta-dhīr dhīraḥ prasāntormir ivodadhiḥ. vāsudeve bhagavati sarva-jñe pratyag-ātmani. pareṇa bhakti-bhāvena labdhā'tmā mukta-bandhanaḥ. ātmānam sarvabhūteṣu bhagavantam avasthitam. apaśyat sarva-vhūtāni bhagavatyaṇi cā'tmani. icchā-dveṣa-vihīnena sarvatra sama-cetasā. bhagavad-bhakti-yogena prāptā bhāgavati gatiḥ.. 3.24.43-47.*

plexity as well as unity of his experience in ordinary life. In the parade of his experiences—in waking state, dream and dreamless sleep—he feels his association with the world and yet his dissociation from all. The nature of such experience suggests that the questioner (the pragmatic “I” or the finite being) includes as well as excludes his environment. Such observation expanded to its farthest limit would land us to the pure being that incorporates and yet transcends all. This is what the *Upaniṣads* call *Brahman*, the bare existence. It is the ideal “I” in the sense that it is the meeting point of both the subjective view and the objective view. *Brahman* is the fulfilment of my Self (myself) as it is the essence of the objective world. But the finite self which thus finds its fulfilment in the Infinite (*Brahman*) has to discover that the Infinite is not merely a light but is the Great Person, the questioner’s ideal Self; and, if “self” means vitality and life, that Great Person must be the source from which all life flows. In other words, He must be *Paramātman*. But life must be grounded in happiness. Life is extinguished from an unhappy person. The gloom of sorrow instigates one to put an end to one’s life. So the *Taittirīya* declares: Who will live and breathe if he is not immersed in happiness all the time?¹⁰⁸ Thus the quest of “I” leads us to the basis of original Life. This basis is *Bhagavat*, the all-bliss, in which all powers have found their summit. As the highest fulfilment of my Self (myself) it has to be the supreme *Puruṣa* (*parama puruṣa*), the most dynamic personality that realises all possible developments. *Brahman*, *Paramātman* and *Bhagavat* thus stand for three successive and hierarchical stages of fulfilment of the finite soul. The question “What am I?” is satisfied with *Bhagavat*. Beyond that is non-dual consciousness—the melting point of the questioner, his question and his goal.

According to the *Bhāgavata*,¹⁰⁹ Truth may also be designated as “*puraṇ-jana*” because it manifests different states of existence (*pura*). In its supra-transcendental form, it defies the possibility of description and therefore it need not

¹⁰⁸ ko hyevā'nyāt kaḥ prāṇyāt yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt TU 2.7.7.

¹⁰⁹ puruṣaṁ puraṇ-janaṁ vidyād yad vyanaktyā'tmanaḥ puram.
eka-dvi-tri-catuṣ-pādaṁ bahu-pādam a-pādakam... 4.29.2.

have a "pura" (*a-pāda*). Conceived as a grand unity, shining above all like the sun, it may be conceived to have a "pura" comparable to the solar disc (*eka-pāda*). Similarly, Reality may be looked upon as *two* if we take into consideration the immanent and transcendent aspects, *three* if the emphasis be laid upon its transcendental nature and *four* if the three transcendental grades are combined with the immanent grade. Reality may also be taken to have *many many* "*pādas*" if we keep in mind the thousand-footed *Puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. To the *Bhāgavata* all these views are acceptable as far as they go but none of them is allowed to cloud the fact that truth is one and indivisible. One may take the *four* grades of Reality as the norm of its description but they refer to the same Truth. *Bhagavat*, the third grade, is nothing but the non-dual consciousness,¹¹⁰ *Paramātman* is *Bhagavat*¹¹¹ and *Brahman* is *Paramātman*.¹¹² Not only the lower grade is included in the higher but the higher grade *has* to include the lower. Thus the non-dual is *Bhagavat*,¹¹³ *Bhagavat* is *Paramātman* (*ādī-puruṣa*)¹¹⁴ and *Bhagavat* is *Puruṣa*, immanent form of *Brahman*, the first grade.¹¹⁵

One needs a note of caution at this stage. The *Bhāgavata* seems to have employed the term "*Brahman*" to mean three things:—(1) The supra-transcendental or the Absolute, (2) all the four grades of Reality, taken as a unity and (3) the first grade of Reality. Primarily the grand unity of the four grades deserves the designation of *Brahman*. But as the Absolute includes the three other grades it should as well be described by the

¹¹⁰ *tatrodvahat paśupa-vaṁśa-tiśutva-nāṣṭyam
brahmādvayam* 10.13.61 ab.

¹¹¹ *nā'taḥ paraṁ parama yad bhavataḥ svarūpam
ānanda-mātram a-vikalpam a-biddha-varcaḥ.
paśyāmi viśva-sṛjam ekam a-viśvam ātman
bhutendriyātmakam adas ta upāśrito'smi..* 3.9.3.

¹¹² *tad āhur akṣaram brahma sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam.
viṣṇor dhāma paraṁ sākṣāt puruṣasya mahātmanaḥ..* 3.11.42.

¹¹³ *jñānam viśuddham paramārtham ekam
anantar-antar-bahir brahma satyam.
pratyak praśāntaṁ bhagavac-chabda-samjñam
yad vāsudevaṁ kavayo vadanti..* 5.12.11.

¹¹⁴ *tvam ādyaḥ puruṣaḥ sākṣāt* 1.7.23a.

¹¹⁵ *jagṛhe pauruṣaṁ rūpaṁ bhagavān mahad-ādibhiḥ.
sām-bhūtaṁ soḍaśa-kalam ādau loka-sisṛkṣayā..* 1.3.1.

same term. The first grade of Reality might also have the same name because it is the transcendental being out of which creation bursts into existence. But *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads* does mean all the four grades and should not be understood to have been confined to the first grade only. The observation of the author of *Caitanya-caritā'mṛta* that *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads* is only the external splendour (*tanu-bhā*) of the third grade of Reality (*Bhagavat*) is an instance of the confusion between *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*, consisting in all the four grades including the third grade, and the first grade of Reality.

The most outstanding contribution of the *Bhāgavata* in the sphere of the philosophy of religion is its conception of *Bhagavān* Śrī-Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavata* equates Him with *Bhagavat*, the third grade of Reality.¹¹⁶ In the *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*, the third grade is Māhā-Viṣṇu; and, Kṛṣṇa as well as Rāma are but *Avatāras* (Incarnations) in spite of all their dignity.¹¹⁷ In the *Bhāgavata* as well we have traces that Kṛṣṇa was a Descent.¹¹⁸ Yet, in the same context the *Bhāgavata* has stressed upon Kṛṣṇa being the third grade of Reality, the summum bonum of all human aspirations. We shall show that Kṛṣṇa, the Descent, was the historical Kṛṣṇa mentioned in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* as the disciple of Ghora Āṅgīrasa and the son of Devakī, while Kṛṣṇa, the third grade, is a unique development of the Viṣṇu concept in the process of its fusion with the historical Kṛṣṇa. This metaphysical Kṛṣṇa as distinguished from the historical Kṛṣṇa can legitimately be regarded as Mahā-Viṣṇu, an important development of the Viṣṇu concept.

As early as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* the metaphysical problem stirred the mind of man as to how the non-dual Reality could become dual. The *Upaniṣad* offers a psychological explanation thereof. Reality was One and it was not happy. Hence no one pleases to be left alone. So it desired for a second and bifurcated itself into two. So it thought in terms of

¹¹⁶ *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* 1.3.27 b.

¹¹⁷ *atha ca rāma-kṛṣṇā'dyavatāreṣu...parama-tattva-paramā-vibhava'nusandhānam* MahāU 2.13.

¹¹⁸ *ekona-vimśe vimśatime rāma-kṛṣṇau iti* 1.3.23 ac.

the male and the female, the husband and the wife.¹¹⁹ Such an explanation involves a couple of facts—a second and the purpose of realising pleasure. In consonance with the idea of non-duality, both of them have to be conceived as pertaining to the very essence of Reality. In other words, Reality as bliss unfolded its innate nature in the company of its native power which, in the light of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, may be conceived as a female. As no purpose extraneous to Reality can possibly be ascribed to it, the divine activity involved in the process of unfoldment of its own pleasure can be compared to the purposeless frivolity of a child playing with its own shadow.

The first expression of the non-dual is therefore pure bliss (*ānanda-maya*). In the *Bhāgavata*, pure bliss is the third grade of Reality and it is no other than Śrī-Kṛṣṇa who, as the Great *Puruṣa*, indulged in play with cowherd girls, His own powers¹²⁰ It was a play with His own shadows,¹²¹ childlike mirth that demonstrates the purposeless sport (*līlayā*) of the third grade of Reality.¹²²

If the unfoldment of divine ecstasy is compared with the play of a child the development of the process of unfoldment may be conceived in terms of the growth of a child as well. The child gradually matures into a youth. At this stage his pure joy is replaced by knowledge. The youth marries and that gives rise to progeny. This is exhibited in the life of Kṛṣṇa. His life is distributed successively at three places—Vṛndāvana, Mathurā and Dvārakā—symbolizing the residence of the third grade of Reality in *Goloka* (the realm of light), that of the second grade of Reality (Viṣṇu, the *Vaikuṇṭha-pati*) in *Vaikuṇṭha* (the land of freedom from limitations) and that of the first grade of Reality in the material universe respectively. In other words, joy develops into knowledge and that into the state of becoming the material universe. These three are *Bhagavat*, *Paramātmā* and *Brahman* respectively. *Bhagavat* is con-

¹¹⁹ *sa vai naiva reme. tasmād ekāki na ramate. sa dvitīyam accehat. sa ha etāvān āsa yathā strī-puṃsau saṃpariṣvaktāu. sa imam evātmānam dvedhāpātayat tataḥ patiḥ ca patnī ca abhavatām.* BU 1.4.3.

¹²⁰ *tābhir vidhūta-śokābhir bhagavān acyuto vṛtaḥ. vyarocatādhikam tāta puruṣaḥ śaktibhir yathā..* 10.32.10.

¹²¹ *reme rameṣo vṛja-sundaribhir yathārbbhakaḥ sva-pratibimba-vibhramah..* 10.33.16 cd.

¹²² *reme sa bhagavāns tābhir ātmārāmo'pi līlayā* 10.33.19 cd.

ceived to indulge in pleasure in *Goloka*, *Paramātmān* as knowledge is taken to live in *Vaikuṇṭha*. *Brahman* is being, pure and simple, a sort of lull before the cosmic storm. It is therefore not conceived in terms of a spiritual abode excepting when it enters the material universe. At the end of the universe Reality dissolves into its original state of transcendental non-duality. All these have been exhibited by the *Bhāgavata* through the life of Kṛṣṇa—his enjoyment at Vṛndāvana, vigilance as a king at Mathurā, leading the life of a householder at Dvārakā and finally receding back to His own self, the state of non-duality. Divine ecstasy thus completes its own circle.

As in the *Tri-pād-vibhūti-mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*, the elaboration of Reality into four grades is due to the enlargement of *Sva-dhā* (innate power) concept. To the *Bhāgavata* this *Sva-dhā* is *Māyā*. The *Bhāgavata* shows preference for this term out of host of other terms—*Prakṛti*, *Pradhāna*, *Ajā* and so on—all to be found in the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*. Like the *Mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*, the *Bhāgavata* enlarges the *Māyā* concept into several other powers all bearing “*māyā*” as a part of their names; but the *Bhāgavata* does it more thoroughly. Corresponding to the third grade of Reality (Śrī-Kṛṣṇa) is *Yoga-māyā*;¹²³ to the second grade of Reality (Viṣṇu) belongs Śrī, *Viṣṇu-māyā* or *Mahā-māyā*;¹²⁴ and, the first grade (*Brahman*) has *Ātma-māyā*.¹²⁵ *Ātma-māyā* differentiates itself into *Māyā* and *Cit-śakti*,¹²⁶ two mutually contradictory powers.¹²⁷ Characterised by these two powers, *Brahman* becomes God (*Puruṣa*), immanent in creation. *Māyā* evolves into *Kāla* (time), *Karman* (totality of actions performed by the *Jīvas*) and *Svabhāva* (nature) on the one hand¹²⁸

¹²³ *bhagavān api tāḥ rātriḥ śaradotphulla-mallikāḥ.*
vikṣya rantum manas cakre yoga-māyām upāśritaḥ.. 10.29.1.

¹²⁴ *viṣṇu-patni mahā-māye mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇe.*
priyethā me mahā-bhāge loka-mātar namo'stu te..
śrīyaṁ viṣṇuṁ ca varadāvāsiṣāṁ prabhavāvubhau.. 6.19.6, 9ab.

¹²⁵ *ātma-māyām yte rājan parasyā'nubhavā'tmanah.*
na ghaṭetā'rtha-sambandhaḥ svapna-drīṣṭur ivā'njasā.. 2.9.1.

¹²⁶ *yathā'tma-tantro bhagavān vikṛīḍatyā'tma-māyayā.*
visṛjya vā yathā māyām udāste sāksi-vad vibhūḥ.. 2.8.23.

¹²⁷ *māyām vyudasya cic-chaktyā kaivalye sthita ātmani..* 1.7.23. cd.

¹²⁸ *kālaṁ karma svabhāvaṁ ca māyeso māyayā svayā.*
ātman yad-icchayā prāptaṁ vibubhūṣur upādade.. 2.5.21.

and *Vidyā*, *Avidyā*¹²⁰ and *Guṇa-mayī Ātma-māyā* or *Prakṛti* on the other.¹³⁰ Out of *Guṇa-mayī Ātma-māyā* the world is eventually brought into existence.

The *Bhāgavata* has re-stated the position of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, referred to above, in the following way:—At the outset *Bhagavat*, the third grade of Reality, was in the state of non-duality, reposed on the desire of being left alone (*ātmecchā'nugatau*). This is evidently an explanation of the *Sva-dhā* concept in its original form. In course of His enjoyment of the pleasure of isolation, He discovered that He was alone. With the power of plurality dormant in Him and the power of consciousness wide awake, He was possessed by the sense of isolation to the extent that He felt Himself as if non-existent (*a-sat*). So, out of Him emerged *Māyā* by which all this was created.¹³¹ According to the *Bhāgavata*, the first expression of the non-dual is in the form of pure bliss intended to display Divine Sport with the aid of *Yoga-māyā*.¹³² *Yoga-māyā*, then, is the power of bliss and, as indicated by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, is related to Śrī-Kṛṣṇa, the third grade of Reality, as a female to the male but not as His wife. The cowherd girls who are but the expansion (*upabṛmhana*) of this *Yoga-māyā* concept, are therefore not described in the *Bhāgavata* as the wives of Kṛṣṇa. As the child of the Non-dual, Kṛṣṇa could not possibly have wives. His association with the cowherd girls was thus a pure sport without any string of worldliness. The divine will of isolation further developed into three phases: (1) I am alone, (2) I wish to be many and (3) I wish to be born many.¹³³ The consciousness of isolation is *Śrī*, *Viṣṇu-māyā* or *Mahā-māyā*. That consciousness or speculation (*īkṣaṇa*) re-

¹²⁰ *vidyā'vidye mama tanū viddhyuddhava tarirīṇām.
bandha-mokṣa-karī ādye māyā me vinirmite...* 11.11.3.

¹³⁰ *mamā'ṅga māyā guṇa-mayyaneka-dhā
vikalpa-buddhiś ca guṇair vidhatte...* 11.22.30.

¹³¹ *bhagavān eka āsedam agra ātmā'tmanām prabhuḥ.
ātmecchā'nugatāvātmā'nānā-matyupalakṣaṇaḥ..
sa vā eṣa tadā draṣṭā nā'paśyad dṛṣyam eka-rāṭ.
mene'santam ivātmānaṁ supta-śaktiḥ a-supta-dṛk..
sa vā etasya saṁ-draṣṭuḥ śaktiḥ sad-asadātmikā.
māyā nāma mahā-bhāga yayedam nir-mame vibhuḥ...* 3.5.23-25.

¹³² *atha te bhagaval-līlā yoga-māyopabṛmhitāḥ.* 3.5.22 ab.

¹³³ *tad aikṣata bahu syām prajāyeya* Ch U 6.1.3.

sulted in a definite will to be many. This will is *Ātma-māyā*.¹³⁴ As the sense of plurality involves the germ of contradiction between one and the other (A and not-A) *Ātma-māyā* as the principle of plurality should evolve into *Cit-śakti*, the principle of spirituality, and *Māyā*, the principle of materiality. *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā* correspond respectively to the "nimeṣa" and "unmeṣa" described by the *Mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad* as belonging to Ādi-Viṣṇu or Ādi-Nārāyaṇa. The *Bhāgavata* has knit them into the structure of *Ātma-māyā* traced ultimately to *Mahā-māyā*, the consciousness of unity that belongs to the very essence of *Paramātmān*, the second grade of Reality. *Cit-śakti* maintains its original character of "ikṣaṇa" throughout the cosmic process. It is this spiritual strength (*vīrya*) of God, that drives creation through each step to its successful conclusion.

In the wake of the *Mahā-nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad*, the *Bhāgavata* deals with the third and the second grades of Reality in terms of powers (*śaktis*) and abodes (*pada*, *pāda*, *dhāman* or *loka*). Śrī-Kṛṣṇa, the third grade of Reality, has His *loka*, eternal and luminous. As constituting the very essence of Reality, it is infinite (*ananta*), real and all-knowledge. Persons who can escape complete dissolution of their own selves into the first grade of Reality are eligible for entering into this realm.¹³⁵ Similarly the abode of Viṣṇu, the second grade of Reality, is *Vaikuṇṭha*.¹³⁶ Residing in the land of light (*go-loka*) *Bhagavat* (Śrī-Kṛṣṇa) is the Supreme Self (*Uttama-Puruṣa*)¹³⁷ and the corresponding power, His playmate, is *Yoga-māyā*, mentioned before. The child (Śrī-Kṛṣṇa) grows into a personality of beauty and consciousness and is wedded

¹³⁴ *ātma-māyām ṛte rājan parasyā'nubhavātmanah.
na ghaṭetā'rtha-sambandhaḥ svapna-draṣṭur ivā'ñjasā..
bahu-rūpā ivā'bhāti māyayā bahu-rūpayā.* 2.9.1, 2ab

¹³⁵ *iti saṁcintya bhagavān mahā-kāruṇiko hariḥ.
darśayāmāsa lokam svam gopānām tamasah param.
satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ yad brahma jyotiḥ sanātanam.
yad dhi patyanti munayo guṇā'pāye samāhitāḥ..
te tu brahma-hradarāṁ nitā magnāḥ kṛṣṇena coddhṛtāḥ.
dadṛśur brahmaṇo lokam yatrā'krūro'dhyagāt purā..
nandādayas tu taṁ dṛṣtvā paramā'nanda-nirvytāḥ.
kṛṣṇaṁ ca tatra chandobhīḥ stūyamānaṁ suvismītaḥ..* 10.28.14-17.

¹³⁶ *ta ekadā bhagavato vaikuṇṭhasya'malā'tmanah.
yayur vaikuṇṭha-nīlayam sarva-loka-namaskṛtam..* 3.15.13.

¹³⁷ *yasyām vai śrūyamāṇāyām kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe.
bhaktir utpadyate pūruṣaḥ śoka-moha-bhaya'pahā..* 1.7.7.

to *Śrī* or *Mahā-māyā*. The conception of power as wife, envisaged by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, finds its fulfilment in the concept of *Śrī*. As marriage is the dawn of creation, Viṣṇu, the second grade wedded to *Śrī*, is conceived as "*Ādi-Puruṣa*".¹³⁸ Finally *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality, is called "*Puruṣa*" (God) because He lives in the material world, His abode (*pura*), in the company of *Ātma-Māyā* bifurcating itself into *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā*. We have thus three *Puruṣas*—*Puruṣa*, *Ādi-Puruṣa* and *Uttama-Puruṣa* (or *Mahā-Puruṣa*)—with their corresponding powers, *Ātma-māyā*, *Mahā-māyā* and *Yoga-māyā*. This is indeed a great development on the concept of *Puruṣa* propounded by the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā*.

The *Bhāgavata* evolution of the concept of *Māyā*, the principle of materiality, is interesting. The *Śvetāśvatara* had included *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* etc., adduced by different authorities as their views on the origin of creation, in the "*māhiman*" of the Deity. The *Bhāgavata* not only does the same¹³⁹ but assigns to them specific functions in the cosmic process. *Kāla* breaks the inertia in the three *guṇas*, flow of the *guṇas* towards a transformation takes place by *Svabhāva* while the actual creation of a category is the function of the totality of action (*Karman*)¹⁴⁰ "*Yadṛcchā*", one of these views, has been sublimated to the status of the original impulse, *Sva-dhā*¹⁴¹ that works even behind Divine Sport. *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* were left by the *Śvetāśvatara* as powers of the Deity, unconnected with *Māyā*. The *Bhāgavata* takes them as the forms of *Māyā*. *Māyā* of the *Bhāgavata* being thus impregnated with infinite possibilities of development could hardly be identified with *Prakṛti*, the primordial matter, as has been done by the *Śvetāśvatara*. At best *Prakṛti* could just be one among many other forms of *Māyā*. *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* operate on *Prakṛti* (*guṇa-mayī Ātma-māyā*) under the overall superinten-

¹³⁸ *yatra cā'dyaḥ pumān āste bhagavān śabda-gocaraḥ. sattvaṁ viṣṭabhya virajāṁ svānāṁ no mṛḍayan dṛśaḥ..* 3.15.15.

¹³⁹ *kecit karma vadantyenaṁ svabhāvaṁ apare nṛpa. eke kālaṁ pare dauvaṁ puṁsaḥ kāmam utāpare..* 4.11.22.

¹⁴⁰ *kālād guṇa-vyatikaraḥ pariṇāmaḥ svabhāvataḥ. karmaṇo janma mahataḥ puruṣādhiṣṭhītād abhūt..* 2.5.22.

¹⁴¹ *kālaṁ karma svabhāvaṁ ca māyeṣo mayayā svayā. ātman yadṛcchayā prāptaṁ vibubhūṣur upādade..* 2.5.21.

dence of God. When *Prakṛti* has created the world, the individual soul becomes bound up with it by the influence of *Avidyā*. Its empirical life continues until *Cit-śakti* kindles *Vidyā*. The *Bhāgavata* has thus conceived *Māyā* to fall into *Prakṛti* and *Avidyā*, to explain the physical universe and the subjective reaction of the individual soul thereto. But both belong to *Māyā* as does *Vidyā* and all the three including *Vidyā* vanish when *Vidyā* kindled by *Cit-śakti* burns *Māyā* in its totality. Divested of its material costume, the soul then retires to pure being, the infinity, pure knowledge, pure bliss, the non-dual.

The evolution of *Prakṛti* into categories deserves consideration at this place. *Prakṛti*, *Pradhāna* or *Avyakta* is said to evolve into twentyfour categories—*Citta*, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Manas*, *Buddhi* (collectively called *antaḥ-karāṇa*, the inner mechanism), five sense organs, five action organs, five subtle elements and five gross elements¹⁴². The *Bhāgavata* considers them to be the embodiment of *sa-guṇa-Brahman* and Time is the twentyfifth principle¹⁴³. Time is taken here to be the external representation of the Spirit which is revealed in the mind as *Puruṣa*.¹⁴⁴ The recognition of twentyfive categories—twentyfour material and one spiritual—seems to be the view of the *Bhāgavata*.

Of these *Citta* or *Mahat* is the first evolute of *Prakṛti*. From *Mahat*, *Ahaṁkāra* of tripartite nature is brought into existence. From *Sāttvika Ahaṁkāra* is born the mind and from *Rājasa Ahaṁkāra*, *Buddhi* (the determinate and indeterminate knowledge of external objects). *Buddhi* is further differentiated into five sense organs. From *Rājasa Ahaṁkāra* the second set to emerge consists of five action organs. From *Tāmasa Ahaṁkāra* the five subtle elements are produced and they in turn generate the five gross elements.^{144a} The five gross elements are integrated into a cosmic egg (*aṇḍa*) which *Brahmā*, charged with

¹⁴² *pañcabhiḥ pañcabhir brahma caturbhir daśabhis tathā. etac catur-vimśatikam gaṇam prādhānikam viduḥ..* 3.26.11.

¹⁴³ *etavān eva saṁkhyāto brahmaṇaḥ sa-guṇasya ca. sanniveśo mayā prokto yaḥ kālaḥ pañca-vimśakaḥ..* 3.26.15.

¹⁴⁴ *antaḥ puruṣa-rūpeṇa kāla-rūpeṇa yo bahiḥ. samanvetyeṣa sattvānām bhagavān ātma-māyayā..* 3.26.18.

^{144a} *daiivāt kṣubhita-darminyām svasyām yonau paraḥ pumān. ādhatta vīryam sāsūta mahat-tattvaṁ hiraṇ-mayam.. mahat-tattvāt vikurvānād bhagavad-vīrya-sambhavāt. kriyā-śaktir ahaṁkāras tri-vidhaḥ samapadyata.*

the strength of God, gradually manifests into the fourteen planes of existence, seven higher and seven lower.¹⁴⁵

Prakṛti evolves in its substratum, the cosmic *Puruṣa* (God) and it receives impetus for evolution from *Kāla*. But all the three ultimate principles—*Prakṛti*, *Puruṣa* and *Kāla*—are merged in the essence of *Brahman*.¹⁴⁶ Creation is contemporaneous with the “*ikṣaṇa*” (superintendence) of God. So the merger takes place the moment this “*ikṣaṇa*” is withdrawn.¹⁴⁷

The above statement of categories may not seem to be exhaustive. For instance, while it takes note of *Kāla*, it seems to have left out *Svabhāva* and *Karman*, besides its silence over *Vidyā* and *Avidyā*. Further, it appears to accept *Prakṛti* as identical with *Māyā* which, as we have indicated above, should be taken as a much wider concept than *Prakṛti*. Similarly in its other version of cosmic evolution the *Bhāgavata* identifies *Buddhi* with *Mahat*, which (*Buddhi*) then does not find recognition as a separate category.¹⁴⁸ There is also variation in details as regards the creations from *Ahaṁkāra*.¹⁴⁹ Does this suggest that the *Bhāgavata* is just a medley of accretions of materials through different centuries, thus lacking a unity of thought? Or, does it reveal, as it has once more exposed in the case of the number of the

vaikārikād vikurvāpān manas-tattvam ajāyata.
taijasāt tu vikurvāpād buddhi-tattvam abhūt sati.
dravya-sphuraṇa-vijñānam indriyāṇām anugrahaḥ..
taijasānindriyāṇyeva kriyā-jñāna-vibhāgaśah..
tāmasāc ca vikurvāpād bhagavad-vīrya-coditāt.
śabda-mātram abhūt tasmān nabhaḥ śrotram tu śabda-gam..
3.26.19, 23, 27ab, 29, 31ab, 32.

¹⁴⁵ mayā saṁcoditā bhāvāḥ sarve saṁhatya-kāriṇaḥ.
aṇḍam utpādayāmāsur mamā'yatanam uttamam.
tasminn ahaṁ samabhavam aṇḍe salīla-saṁsthitau.
mama nābhyām abhūt padmaṁ viśvā'khyam tatra cātma-bhūḥ.
so'srjat tapasā yukto rajasā mad-anugrahāt.
lokān sa-pālān viśvā'tmā bhūr bhuvaḥ svar iti tri-dhā..
devānām oka āsīt svar bhūtānāṁ ca bhuvaḥ padam.
marttyādināṁ ca bhūr-lokaḥ siddhānāṁ tri-tayāt param.
adho'surāṇām nāgānām bhūmer eko'srjat prabhuḥ. 11.24.9-12, 13ab.

¹⁴⁶ prakṛtir yasyopādānam ādhāraḥ puruṣaḥ paraḥ.
sato'bhiyañjakaḥ kālo brahma tat-tritayan tvam. 11.24.19.

¹⁴⁷ sargaḥ pravartate tāvat paurvāparyeṇa nityaśah.
mahān guṇa-visargār'thaḥ sthityanto yāvad-ikṣaṇam. 11.24.20.

¹⁴⁸ vaikārikas taijasaś ca tāmasaś cetyaham tri-ṛt.
tanmātrendriya-manasaṁ kāraṇaṁ cid-acin-mayaḥ. 11.24.7.

¹⁴⁹ arthas tanmātrikāj jājñe tāmasād indriyāṇi ca.
taijasād devatā āsann ekādāśa ca vaikṛtāt. 11.24.8.

transcendental "*padas*" of Reality, that its highly monistic trend of thought makes it comparatively indifferent to paying much of attention to details though the latter may suit the temperament of rigid scholasticism? The *Bhāgavata* refers to different views that had made their rise as to the number of categories: twenty-six, twenty-five, seven, nine, six, four, eleven, seventeen, sixteen, thirteen, five and three.¹⁵⁰ The *Bhāgavata* observes with a note of appreciable reconciliation that all these views are tenable. Views, in fact, are bound to differ because the delusive power of *Māyā* has silently crept into them. They will flourish as long as *Māyā* holds its ground but will disappear when discursive thinking will give place to spiritual tranquillity.¹⁵¹ It can be said from the logical plane, however, that the categories generally differ in number according as the cause and the effect are treated as one or as two. Therefore, an enumeration of categories deserves approval at its face value if a case can be made out for it.¹⁵² For instance, God may be recognised as a reality distinct from the individual soul, to provide for the saving knowledge for the individual soul labouring under delusion from time immemorial.¹⁵³ Alternatively, God and the individual soul need not be taken as two different realities because both are one in substance.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, knowledge (*Vidyā*), action (*Karman*) and ignorance (*Avidyā*) can safely be included in *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* of *Prakṛti* respectively. Likewise, Time is just the

¹⁵⁰ *kati tattvāni viśveṣa saṁkhyātānyrṣibhiḥ prabho. navaikādaśa-pañca-triṅyāttha tvam iha śufruma. kecit ṣaḍ-vimśatim prāhur apare pañca-vimśatim. saptaikē nava ṣaṭ kecit catvāryekādaśā pare.. kecit sapta-daśa prāhuḥ ṣoḍaśaikē trayodaśa..* 11.22.1-2.

¹⁵¹ *yuktañ ca santi sarvatra bhāṣante brāhmaṇa yathā. māyām madīyam udgrhya vadatām kiṁ nu dur-ghaṣam. naitad evaṁ yathā'tiha tvam yad ahaṁ vacmi tat tathā. evaṁ vivadatām hetuṁ śaktayo me dur-atyayāḥ.. yāsām vyatikarād āśid vikalpo vadatām param. prāpte śama-dame'pyeti vādas tam anu śāmyati..* 11.22.4-6.

¹⁵² *paraśparā'nupraveśāt tattvānām puruṣarṣabha. paurvāparya-prasaṁkhyānam yathā vaktur vivakṣitam.. ekasminn api dṛsyante pravīṣṭānītarāṇi ca. pūrvāsmiṇ vā paraśmiṇ vā tattve tattvāni sarvaśaḥ.. paurvāpauryam ato'miśām prasaṁkhyānam abhipsatām. yathā viviktaṁ yad vaktraṁ gṛhṇīmo yukti-sambhavāt..* 11.22.7-9.

¹⁵³ *anādyavidyā-yuktasya puruṣasyā'tma-vedanam. svato na sambhavād anyas tattva-jño jñāna-do bhavet..* 11.22.10.

¹⁵⁴ *puruṣeśvarayor atra na vailakṣanyam anuvapi tad-anya-kalpanā'pārthā..* 11.22.11 abc.

disturbance of the three *guṇas* and Nature (*Svabhāva*) is but the transformation of *Prakṛti* into *Mahat* and so on.¹⁵⁵ Categories may be (1) nine: *Puruṣa*, *Prakṛti*, *Mahat*, *Ahaṁkāra* and the five elements, (2) eleven: five sense organs, five action organs and the mind, (3) five: the five gross elements, (4) three: the three *guṇas* of *Prakṛti*, (5) twenty-six: *Prakṛti* consisting of twenty-four evolutes (indicated above), the individual soul and God, (6) twenty-five: twenty-four evolutes of *Prakṛti*, and *Puruṣa*, (7) seven: the five elements, *Jīva* and *Īśvara*, (8) six: the five elements and *Puruṣa*, (9) four: the three elements, fire, water and earth, and the soul, (10) seventeen: five gross elements, five subtle elements, five organs, mind and the soul, (11) sixteen: the same as in (10), mind and the soul being regarded as one, (12) thirteen: five elements, five organs, the mind, *Jīva* and *Īśvara* and (13) eleven: the same as in (12), the mind, *Jīva* and *Īśvara* being taken as one.¹⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that all these thirteen views fall within the pattern of categories recognized by the *Bhāgavata*. They range between uncompromising materialism resulting in the denial of the soul distinct from matter, and bald theism that recognizes God to save the individual soul. These views may be presumed to have been formulated on the basis of different statements in the different *Upaniṣads*. The *Bhāgavata* seems to have drawn upon the *Praśna-Upaniṣad* in this respect.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ *sattvaṁ jñānaṁ rajaḥ karma tamo'jñānam ihocyate.*
guṇa-vyatikaraḥ kālaḥ svabhāvaḥ sūtram eva ca. 11.22.13.

¹⁵⁶ *puruṣaḥ prakṛtiḥ vyaktam ahaṁkāro nabho'nilaḥ.*
jyotiḥ āpaḥ kṣitiḥ iti tattvānyuktāni me nava.
śrotvaṁ tvag darśanaṁ ghrāṇo jihveti jñāna-śaktayaḥ.
vak-pāṇyupastha-pāyvaṅghriḥ karmānyaṅgobhayaṁ manaḥ.
śabdāḥ sparśo gandho rūpaṁ cetyartha-jātayaḥ.
sargādaḥ prakṛtiḥ hyasya kārya-kāraṇa-rūpiṇi.
sattvādibhir guṇair dhatte.
saptaiva dhātava iti tatrā'rthaḥ pañca khādayaḥ.
jñānam atmabhayādāhāras tato dehendriyāsavaḥ.
śaḍ ityatrā'pi bhūtāni pañca saṁsthāḥ paraḥ pumān.
tair yukta ātma-sambhūtaiḥ sṛṣṭvedam samupāviṣat.
catvāryeveti tatra teja āpo'nnam ātmanaḥ.
saṁkhyāne sapta-daśake bhūta-matrendriyāni ca.
pañca pañcaika-manasā ātmā sapta-daśa smṛtaḥ.
tadvat soḍaśa-saṁkhyāne ātmaiva mana ucyate.
bhūtendriyāni pañcaiva mana ātmā trayo-daśa.
ekādaśatva ātmā'sau mahā-bhūtendriyāni ca. 11.22.14-24.

¹⁵⁷ *prthivī ca prthivī-mātrā ca, āpaś ca āpo-mātrā ca, tejaś ca tejo-*
mātrā ca, vāyus ca vāyu-mātrā ca, ākāśaś ca akāśa-mātrā ca, cakṣus ca

From the logical plane of enumeration of categories the *Bhāgavata* rises to the metaphysical plane and reduces the whole cosmic evolution to two categories, *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*.¹⁵⁸ Finally it dissolves the subject-object duality into the non-duality of the Absolute.¹⁵⁹

From the practical point of view, *Prakṛti* has three stages—the unmanifest (*avyakta*), the subtle (*sūkṣma*) consisting of the categories from *Mahat* to the five subtle elements, and the gross (*sthūla*), the cosmic egg manifesting itself into the fourteen worlds. Through all these stages, God, the immanent form of *Brahman* (the first grade of Reality), pursues creation. With the aid of His powers—*Māyā* and *Cit-śakti*—He endures through creation in dual forms, *Īśvara* and *Jīva*. But creation is nothing but *Brahman*. Bondage and release are therefore a couple of dreams. Metaphysical enquiry viz, “what am I?” is also a part of this dream. Awakening to the non-dual nature of Reality puts an end to them. What remains is Reality. It is *what it is*; yet, Reality is described by the *Bhāgavata*, following the time-honoured tradition, as non-dual consciousness marked by three features—pure being, pure knowledge and pure bliss (*Brahman*, *Paramātman* and *Bhagavat*).

draṣṭavyam ca, śrotam ca śrotavyam ca, ghrānam ca ghrātavyam ca, rasas ca rasayitavyam ca, tvak ca sparśayitavyam ca, vāk ca vaktavyam ca, hastau ca ādātavyam ca, upasthas ca ānandayitavyam ca, pāyus ca visarjayitavyam ca, pādaḥ ca gantavyam ca, manaś ca mantavyam ca, buddhiś ca boddhavyam ca, ahaṁkāras ca ahaṁkartavyam ca, cittam ca cetayitavyam ca. PU 4.8.

¹⁵⁸ *prakṛtiḥ puruṣas cobhau yadyapyātma-vilakṣaṇau. anyonyāpāśrayāt kṛṣṇa dṛśyate na bhidā tayoḥ.* 11.22.26.

¹⁵⁹ *āsij jñānam atha artha ekam eva'vikalpitam. vañ-mano'gocaram satyam dvidhā samabhavad bṛhat. tayoḥ ekatara hyarthaḥ prakṛtiḥ sobhayātmikā. jñānam tvanyatamo bhāvaḥ puruṣaḥ so'bhidiyate..* 11.24.2ab, 3cd, 4

CHAPTER II

THE FOURTH GRADE OF REALITY

REALITY—IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, then, propounds Reality both as immanent and transcendent. The universe originates from Reality, is sustained therein and finally dissolves into the same Reality. But during all this world-process Reality is eternally established in its native grandeur without the least reference to the world-process which may then be traced to cosmic illusion.¹

Immanence of Reality as a precondition to the world-process is first traceable in the form of God. Without offending its non-dual nature, Reality can still concern itself with the world-process as God, the personal being.² God can dress Himself into manifold realities—*Brahmā*, the creator, *Maheśvara*, the god of destruction, and many other deities—all entrusted with different departments of the cosmic evolution.³ To enhance the cause of cosmic evolution, Reality expresses itself as different deities by resorting to potentiality which forms the core of its essence.⁴ But the universe created by Reality, as personal God, does not belong to an order other than God. The universe is manifested in God. God is the substratum of which the entire creation is the substrate. The presence of God

¹ *janmā'dyasya yato'nvayād itarataś cā'rtheṣvabhijñāḥ sva-rāṣ tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ. tejo-vāri-mydam yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo mṣā dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ param dhimahi.. 1.1.1.*

² *tvam brahma pūrṇam amṛtaṁ vi-guṇaṁ vi-lokaṁ ānanda-mātraṁ a-vikāraṁ ananyad anyat. viśvasya hetur udaya-sthiti-samyamānām ātmeśvaraś ca tad-apekṣatayā'napekṣaḥ. 8.12.7.*

³ *aham brahma a śarvaś ca jagataḥ kāraṇaṁ param. ātmeśvara upadraṣṭā svayaṁ-dyḡ a-viśeṣaṇaḥ.. 4.7.50.*

⁴ *namaḥ śivāya rudrāya namaḥ śakti-dharāya ca. sarva-vidyā'dhipataye bhūtānāṁ pataye namaḥ.. namo hiraṇya-garbhāya prāṇāya jagad-ātmane. yogaiśvarya-śarirāya namas te joga-hetave.. 8.16.32-33.*

at the centre explains the convergence of the bewildering multiplicity of the universe to the harmony of a cosmic design. This means that God suffused creation with His presence as the inner controller. Thus while creation was in God, God was in creation.⁵ The relationship between God and the universe was not confined to the creator and the created or to the controller and the controlled; for all times the universe belongs to the essence of God.⁶ The *Bhāgavata* understands the immanence of Reality in terms of such intimate relationship.

Not only in the creation of the physical world God intimately co-operates, but He permeates also the bare existence of man. As man in his routine existence experiences the three states—the waking, dream and dreamless sleep—the details of his experience are recorded in God who serves as the witness (*sākṣin*). Memory of man draws upon the impressions buried in the witness to fill in its content. Empirical life of man exposes disintegration of personality, a part of which is caught up in the stream of phenomenal forms, while the other part persists unpolluted to maintain uniformity and concord in the midst of distraction and chaos. This static aspect of man is God serving as the witness. Memory then points to the immanence of God in man.⁷

So, the life of man continues to flow parallel to the flow of his environment. Out of interaction between man and his environment the world changes and inevitably, bringing in its train sometimes violent disruption of law and order. This necessitates God's direct intervention to restore peace in the world. God who has all along been working behind the cosmic process becomes immanent in a tangible form called "Descent"

⁵ *ātmanāṃ sarva-bhūteṣu bhagavantam avasthitam.
apaśyat sarva-bhūtāni bhagavatyaṇi cā'tmani..* 4.24.46.

⁶ *aham bhavān bhavaś caiva ta ime munayo'grajāḥ.
surā'sura-narā nāgāḥ kṣagā mṛga-sarīrṇpāḥ.
gandharvā'psaraso yakṣā rakṣo-bhūta-gaṇoragāḥ.
paśavaḥ pitarāḥ siddhā vidyādhrāś cāraṇā drumāḥ..
anye ca vividhā jīvā jala-sihala-nabhaukasāḥ.
graharkṣa-ketavaś tārāś tadītaś stanayitnavāḥ..
sarvaṃ puruṣa evedam bhūtaṃ bhavyaṃ bhavaś ca yat.
tenedam āvṛtaṃ viśvaṃ vitastim adhitiṣṭhati..* 2.6.13-16.

⁷ *ubhayaṃ smarataḥ pumsaḥ prasvāpa-pratibodhayoḥ.
anveti vyatiricyeta taj jñānaṃ brahma tat param..* 6.16.56.

(*avatāra*) to restore the equilibrium lost temporarily.⁸ But a God's "Descent" may be as good a cosmic phenomenon observable by all, as it may be a strictly individual business. An individual, overburdened with phenomenal multiplicity, may, with all the strength at his command, withdraw from the world at large and pent himself up to the vital core of his being, and, then, in the profound depth of his vision, obtain the benign revelation of God. The Divine may thus stoop to the individual being of man.⁹

This is in short the story of Reality immanent in the universe. But the universe, although it may be looked upon as the cosmic form of God, does not and cannot exhaust Reality. Far away from the gross, Reality—the subtle, unmanifest, beginningless, endless and hence eternal presence—shines in its native glory that defies all attempts on the part of mind and speech to define it.¹⁰ The transcendental presence is confirmed by the *Bhāgavata* when it says that Reality is something other than the universe.¹¹ The Transcendental is free from the turmoils of material existence, which are lulled into perfect repose and self-complacency ensured by the realisation of its native spiritual sovereignty (*svārājya*). Free from the limitations of tripartite energies brought into play by *Māyā* with the aid of modal consciousness,¹² Reality transcends the barriers of cause and effect¹³ and is settled in its infinitude (*bhūman*).

Transcendence and immanence—unity and multiplicity—existing side by side to form the essence of Reality are bound

⁸ *praśānta-māyā-guṇa-karma-liṅgam*
a-nāma-rūpaṁ sad-asad-vimuktam.
jñānopadeśāya gṛhīta-dehaṁ
namāma he tvāṁ puruṣaṁ purāṇaṁ.. 9.8.24.

⁹ *sa tvam katham mama vibho'kṣi-ṣaṭhaḥ parā'tmā*
yogelvaraiḥ śruti-dṛṣṭā-mala-hṛd-vibhāvyaḥ. 10.64.26 ab.

¹⁰ *ataḥ paraṁ sūkṣma-tamaṁ avyaktaṁ nir-viśeṣaṇam.*
anādi-madhya-nidhanaṁ nityaṁ vān-manasaḥ paraṁ.. 2.10.34.

¹¹ *ityabhiṣṭūya puruṣaṁ yad-rūpaṁ anidaṁ yathā.* 10.2.42 ab.

¹² *namo'stu tasmā upaśānta-śaktaye*
svārājya-lābha-pratipūrītā'tmane.
guṇeṣu māyā-raciteṣu vṛttibhir
na sajjamānāya navasvad-ūtaye.. 8.5.44.

¹³ *tat tasya te sad-asatoḥ parataḥ parasya*
nā'njaḥ svarūpa-gamane prabhavanti bhūmaḥ.
brahmā'dayaḥ kum uta saṁstāvane vayaṁ tu
tat-sarga-sarga-viṣayā api śakti-mātram.. 8.7.34.

to offend the law of contradiction. Reality may either be transcendent or immanent; but how can it be both? The *Bhāgavata* claims Reality, the transcendental, to be more fundamental to reason. An analysis of man brings this out. The soul of man endures through different bodies and fleeting panorama of experiences taking place in the waking state and dream. But in dreamless sleep the soul casts off multiplicity and all that it means, and reposes upon its isolated nature of unity. This shows that unity forms the hard core of the soul while multiplicity is the crust of it—somewhat outside its own nature.¹⁴ The *Bhāgavata* therefore traces diversity to *Māyā*, the limited vision of truth.¹⁵ In fact, unity and diversity are reconciled to the supra-logical nature of Reality. The experience of those who know the Truth has been able to find a consistency between the two. The *Bhāgavata* records four situations in which the duality between the knower and the known is integrated into absolute monism. The situations are:—(1) The beginning of creation when Reality was the only entity, (2) spiritual existence unapproachable by time (*a-yuga*), achieved in liberation, (3) the golden era (*satya-yuga*) when men are supposed to have had the natural vision of unity and (4) the dawning, at any time, of the spiritual insight on the part of an individual.¹⁶ As the ground of consistency between immanence and transcendence Reality is the supreme truth.¹⁷ The validity of the Scriptures and their impelling authority are derived from Reality which *per se* is then independent of all proofs.¹⁸ As a laudable attempt of deciphering the nature of this supreme truth the

¹⁴ *nā'tmā jajāna na mariṣyati naidhate'sau
na kṣiyate savana-vid vyabhicāriṇām hi.
sarvatra śatvad anapāyyupalabdhi-mātram.
prāṇo yathendriya-balena vikalpitaṁ sat..* 11.3.38.

¹⁵ *tvam vā idaṁ sad-asad īśa bhavāṁs tato'nyo
māyā yad ātma-para-buddhir iyaṁ hyapārthā.
yad yasya janma nidhanam sthitir iṣkapaṇ ca
tad vai tad eva vasu-kāla-vad aṣṭi-tarvoḥ..* 7.9.31.

¹⁶ *āśij jñānam atho artha ekam evā'vikalpitam.
yadā viveka-nipuṇā ādau kṛta-yuge'yuge..* 11.24.2.

¹⁷ *tat buddham vimalam viśokam amṛtaṁ satyaṁ param dhīmahi.*

12.13.19 d.

¹⁸ *namaḥ pramāṇa-mūlāya kavaye śāstra-yonaye.
pravṛttāya nivṛttāya nigamāya namo namaḥ..* 10.16.44.

Bhāgavata can rightly claim to be the quintessence of the *Vedas*, the fountains of wisdom.¹⁹

THE ABSOLUTE

The ultimate nature of the supreme truth is described as immutable pure being, absolutely impersonal and actionless. These are, in fact, a few epithets indicative of the nature of Reality. As there is nothing beyond the supreme truth one might call it the Absolute.²⁰ The supreme truth has been defined by those who have got at the core of its being as non-dual consciousness.²¹ It is consciousness, pure and simple, established in its sovereign nature, perfectly immune from mental modes of varying patterns. It is one that has transcended limited vision (*Māyā*) and is beyond the shadow of fear.²² Before the inception of creation when neither internal nor external pronounced itself, consciousness was left to its lonely existence. An undifferentiated lull of profound passivity—the cosmic slumber—prevailed as the only reality and nothing else was possible.²³ Being without a second, consciousness had to fall back upon its own self, a state of absolute isolation.²⁴ Consciousness being the very core of the supreme truth it held on to its own even after creation was brought into existence. Thus after creation Reality retired to the ocean of its infinite nature as if to avoid pollution by tripartite energies (*tri-guṇa*).²⁵ But such consciousness has to be carefully distinguished from modal knowledge. While modal knowledge is conventional, impure, variegated, subjected to in-

¹⁹ *nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam.
pivata bhāgavataṁ rasam ā-layaṁ
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*.. 1.1.3.

²⁰ *vinā'cyutād vastu-tarāṁ na vācyam
sa eva sarvaṁ paramā'tma-bhūtaḥ*.. 10.46.43 cd.

²¹ *vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaṁ yad jñānam advayam*. 1.2.11 ab.

²² *juddhaṁ sva-dhāmyuparatā'khila-buddhyavasthaṁ
cin-mātram ekam abhayaṁ pratiśidhya māyāṁ.
tiṣṭhaṁs tayaiva puruṣatvam upetya tasyām
āste bhavān a-parisuddha ivā'tma-tantraḥ*.. 4.7.26.

²³ *aham evā'sam evā'gre nā'nyat kimcā'ntaraṁ bahiḥ.
saṁjñāna-mātram avyaktam prasuptam iva viśvataḥ*.. 6.4.47.

²⁴ *mama aham evā'bhirūpaḥ kaivalyāt*. 5.3.17.

²⁵ *satyaṁ bhayād iva guṇebhya uru-kramā'ntaḥ
śete samudra upalambhana-mātra ātmā.
nityaṁ kad-indriya-gapaiḥ kṛta-vigrahas tvam*. 10.60.35 abc.

ternality and externality, limited, coloured by objects and is liable to change, absolute consciousness is true, pure, non-dual, without ins and outs, self-complete, unconditioned by any object and immutable.²⁶ Ultimate consciousness is pure because it is not defiled by the saturation of objects—the embodiments of distracting forces which pale into nothingness before the native splendour of Reality. Thus the Absolute embraces perfect serenity, transcends all and cannot be associated with a name or form.²⁷

The Absolute, as the perfect state of self-complacency, is marked by the total absence of wistfulness. It is a state of absolute calm free from all attachments because it represents the gratification of all longings. The Absolute is all gratified because it is the state of attainment of its true nature.²⁸ It has attained its true nature because it has extricated itself from all distracting limitations.²⁹ But under the impulse of creation the Absolute, being the all-comprehensive Reality, splits itself, as it were, into the forms of the knower and the known,³⁰ and thus appears as the objective world to persons labouring under the partial vision of Reality.³¹ With the pronouncement of duality between the knower and the known, the Absolute, as God, regulates the universe on the one hand, and assumes the form of *Pradhāna*, the primordial matter, that serves as the material cause for the evolution of creation on the other. Thus unity and diversity both pertain to the very nature of the Absolute. As the principle of unity, the Absolute is called *para-Brahman* while manifesting itself

²⁶ *jñānaṁ viśuddhaṁ paramārtham ekam .
anantar antar-bahir brahma satyam .
pratyak praśāntaṁ bhagavac-chabda-samjñam
yaś vāsudevaṁ kavayo vadanti..* 5.12.11.

²⁷ *yat tad viśuddhā'nubhava-mātram ekam
sva-tejasā dhvasta-guṇa-vyavastham .
pratyak praśāntaṁ sudhiyo palambhanaṁ
hyanāma-rūpaṁ nir-aham prapadye..* 5.19.4.

²⁸ *nityā'nubhūta-niṣa-lābha-nivṛtta-tṛṣṇaḥ..* 5.6.19 a.

²⁹ *a-vismitaṁ taṁ pariṣūṛṇa-kāmaṁ
svenaiva lābhena samam praśāntam..* 6.9.22 ab.

³⁰ *jñāna-mātram param brahma paramātmeśvaraḥ pumān .
dṛṣṭyādibhiḥ pṛthag-bhāvair bhagavān eka iyate..* 3.32.26

vide also 2.10.36.

³¹ *jñānam ekam parācīnair indriyair brahma nir-guṇam
avabhātyartha-rūpeṇa bhrāntyā śabdā'di-dharmaṇā..* 3.32.28.

through creation it is called *ananta-śakti*.³² The primordial matter (*Pradhāna*) and its evolutes that bring the creation into existence, are all derived from and fed by the infinite energies (*ananta-śaktis*) of the Absolute. But despite the presence of those energies the nature of pure consciousness remains totally unaffected in the Absolute.³³

As the ultimate cause of the universe the Absolute was at work at the beginning of creation; it sustained the universe as long as it continued to exist; and finally, when the world-drama terminated the Absolute remained as the only residuum. In so far as the Absolute endures through the three stages of the world-process it can be discerned as existence pure and simple against the fleeting changes of phenomenal existence.³⁴ The universe owes its origin to the Absolute, is sustained by it and finally dissolves into the Absolute. So the relationship between the Absolute and the universe is that of earth and earthen wares.³⁵ In fact the universe is an externalisation of the Absolute. Objects are unreal in so far they do not reveal the all-comprehensive nature of the Absolute. Thus they are mere shadows (*chāyā*) of Truth though they unmistakably point to the real substance, the very core of all existence.³⁶ The Absolute is universal (*viśva-mūrti*) as it has distributed itself through every detail of the universe though, at the same time, it has transcended the limitations of the conventional world.³⁷ Like subtle elements (*tanmātra*) of gross matter (*bhūtas*)³⁸ the Absolute is existent at all the three stages of the universe and so it is not

³² *namo vijñāna-mātrāya sarva-pratyaya-hetave.
puruṣa-pradhānāya brahmaṇe'nanta-śaktaye..* 10.40.29.

³³ *upacita-ṇava-śaktibhiḥ sva ātma-
nyupacita-sthira-jāṅgamā'layāya.
bhagavata upalabdhi-mātra-dhāmne
sura-ṛṣabhāya namaḥ sanātanāya..* 12.12.68.

³⁴ *ādavante ca madhye ca sṛjyāt sṛjyaṁ yad anvīyāt.
punas tat-pratiṣamkrāme yac chiṣyeta tad eva sat..* 11.19.16.

³⁵ *yaśminn idam yataś cedam tiṣṭhatyapyeti jāyate.
mṛn-mayeṣuiva mṛj-jātis tasmai te brahmaṇe namaḥ..* 6.16.22.

³⁶ *a-satya-cchāyayoktāya sad-ābhāsāya te namaḥ..* 8.3.14.

³⁷ *tvayyagra āsīt tvayi madhya āsīt
tvayyanta āsīt idam ātma-tantre.
tvam ādir anto jagato'sya madhyaṁ
ghaṭasya mṛtsneva paraḥ parasmāt..* 8.6.10.

³⁸ *aham hi sarva-bhūtānām ādir anto'ntaram bahiḥ.
bhautikānām yathā kham vār bhūr vāyur jyotir aṅganāḥ..* 10.82.45.

only true (*satya*) but it is true in three different ways (*tri-satya*).³⁹

The infallible existence of the Absolute in all the three stages of the universe gives rise to the concept of its perfection. An imperfect being changes and modifies itself to reach perfection. But this self-mortification is alien to pure existence which persists for all times without change and variation. So the Absolute is perfect.⁴⁰ The Absolute is perfect also because it has realised itself in all possibilities, the multifarious forms of creation, though its innate unity has remained undisturbed all the time.⁴¹ And perfection lies at the basis of its immutable nature. The universe is caught up in the six stages of becoming viz, origination, sustenance, development, transformation, decay and death. Man, posed against the universe, is perpetually reacting, in the process of self-improvement, against those stages of becoming. But distinguished from man and his world, the Absolute is unrelated to becoming and all that it means. The Absolute knows no origin (*anādi*) and end (*ananta*). It is the divine equilibrium (*sama*) having no development. Being eternal (*nitya*), immutable (*akṣara*) and indestructible (*amṛta*), it is beyond transformation, decay and death.⁴² The *Bhāga-vata* therefore chooses to call it *akṣara-Brahman*.⁴³

The pure existence of the Absolute is not a logical abstraction but it is the perpetual revelation of its blissful nature.⁴⁴

³⁹ *satya-vratam satya-param tri-satyaṁ
satasya yonim nihitam ca satye.
satasya satyam ṛta-satya-netram
satyātmakam tvām śaraṇam prapannaḥ..* 10.2.26.

⁴⁰ *aham evā'sam evā'gre nā'nyad yat sad-asat-param.
paścād aham yad etac ca yo'vaśiṣyeta so'smyaham..* 2.9.32.

⁴¹ *ekas tvam ātmā puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ
satyaḥ swayaṁ-jyotiḥ ananta ādyaḥ.
nityo'kṣaro'ajasra-sukho nir-añjanaḥ
pūrṇādvayo mukta upādrito'mṛtaḥ..* 10.14.23.

⁴² *viśuddhaṁ kevalaṁ jñānaṁ pratyak samyag avasthitam.
satyaṁ pūrṇam anādyantaṁ nir-guṇaṁ nityam a-dvayam..* 2.6.40.

⁴³ *tam akṣaraṁ brahma param pareśam
avyaktam ādhyātmika-yoga-gamyam.
atindriyam sūkṣmam ivā'tidūram
anantaṁ ādyaṁ paripūrṇam idaḥ..* 8.3.21 vide also 3.11.42.

⁴⁴ *asyā'pi deva vapoṣo mad-anugrahasya
svecchāmayasya na tu bhūta-mayasya ko'pi.
neśe mahi tvavasitum manasā'ntareṇa
sākṣāt tavaiva kim utā'tma-sukhā'nubhūteḥ..* 10.14.2.

Material pleasure requires an occasion for its unfoldment; but bliss is always an established fact with the Absolute. In fact, existence and bliss coalesce to form the very core of its being.⁴⁵ It is in fact the "ecstasy of the Absolute" to realise its native sweetness and charm by throwing itself open to all types of ideal manifestations. Creation satisfies a vital need of the Absolute; the world is as indispensable to God as God is to the world. Intrinsic majesty (*nija-mahiman*) of the Absolute is best described in its conception of perfect bliss. Distinct from blind happiness it is the state of self-luminous and tranquil jubilation of the Absolute. One transcends the limited vision (*Māyā*) by the employment of the method of exclusion and, then, with the treasure-trove of wisdom at one's command, touches upon that eternal source of bliss, the Absolute at the height of its glory, the consummation of man's spiritual strivings.⁴⁶

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE SPORT

The Absolute is the meeting ground of unity and diversity. But the logical mind with its unshakeable faith in the law of contradiction will always find this position alarmingly disquieting. The concept of the Absolute is an antithesis to the world of relativity. The Absolute then is actionless and immutable. The idea that the Absolute should be many is a surrender of its immutable nature. Any kind of activity will necessarily imply dualism and that is bound to mean the effacement of its non-dual nature. So why should the Absolute be many and how?

The *Bhāgavata* answers the logical mind by resorting to a position which is primarily alogical. According to the *Bhāgavata*, the perpetual realisation of its blissful nature makes the Absolute perpetually charged with free creativity. It is the spontaneous overflow of the Absolute to realise itself in all kinds of ideal possibilities although it is too subtle to allow pene-

⁴⁵ *satya-jñānā'nantā'nanda-mātraika-rasa-mūrtayah.
a-sprṣṭa-bhūri-māhātmyā api hyupaniṣad-dṛṣām..* 10.13.54.

⁴⁶ *itireṣe'tarkye nija-mahimani sva-pramitike
paratrā'jāto'tan-nirasana-mukha-brahmaka-mitau.
anīṣe'pi draṣṭum kim idam iti vā muhyati sati
cacchādā'jo jñāvā sapadi paramo'jā-javanikām..* 10.13.57.

tration by logic.⁴⁷ Human intellect is too feeble to unveil the mysteries of Divine Sport.⁴⁸ Even spiritual stalwarts who have crystallized their minds through saintly ways fail to visualize the nature of the Absolute unravelling through Divine Sport. Yet the Absolute does assume different forms.⁴⁹ Indeed Divine Sport is the expression of the majestic independence of the Absolute, and so, it refuses to be conditioned by time and space or to be cast into a specific pattern. It bristles with infinite variety that baffles prediction or description of any kind. "Why and How" are completely irrelevant to the unfoldment of Divine Sport.⁵⁰ The Doctrine of Divine Sport is taken as an explanation as to why the Absolute should continue to remain in its pristine isolation in spite of the expression of diversity. The divine rapture brought about by the vital urge eternally inherent in the Absolute is perfectly compatible with concord that weaves all disintegrations into an indivisible whole.⁵¹

Without offending the nature of the Absolute the divine urge proceeds. When it takes a definite direction and to that extent becomes selective, the *Bhāgavata* calls it *Yoga-māyā*. The very name suggests that it is the principle of plurality (*Māyā*) but at the same time charged with divine majesty (*yoga*). *Yoga-māyā* then is the first and primary means through which the Absolute plays with its own self.⁵² *Yoga-māyā* re-

⁴⁷ a-vyākṛta-vihārāya sarva-vyākṛta-siddhaye.
hr̥ṣīkeśa namas te'stu munaye mauna-filine. 10.16.47.

⁴⁸ nūnam bhagavato brahman harer adbhuta-karmaṇaḥ.
dur-vibhāvyaṁ ivā'bhāti kavibhiḥ cā'pi ceṣṭitam.. 2.4.8
vide also 12.10.28.

⁴⁹ na vidyate yasya ca janma karma vā
na nāma-rūpe guṇa-doṣa eva vā.
tathā'pi lokā'pyaya-sambhavāya yaḥ
sva-māyayā tānyanu-kālam ṛcchati.. 8.3.8.

⁵⁰ ko veti bhūman bhagavan parātman
yogelvarotīr bhavatas tri-lokyām.
kva vā katham vā kati vā kadeti
vistārayan kṛdasi yoga-māyām.. 10.14.21.

⁵¹ śaśvat svarūpa-mahasaiva nipīta-bheda-
mohāya bodha-dhiṣaṇāya namaḥ parasmai.
viśvodbha-sthiti-layeṣu nimitta-līlā-
rāsāya te nama idam cakṛmeśvarāya.. 3.9.14.

⁵² iī matir upakalpita vūṣṇā
bhagavati sātvaata-puṁgave vibhūmni.
sva-sukham upagate kvacid vihartum
prakṛtim upeyaṣi yad bhava-pravāhaḥ.. 1.9.32.

veals the spiritual regions—*Goloka* and *Vaikunṭha*—out of pure matter which also builds up the body of God.⁵³ Down the spiritual regions it stimulates God and matter to physical creation.⁵⁴ Thus the universe is brought into existence as a concrete representation of Divine Sport.⁵⁵

⁵³ *mūrtim naḥ puru-kṛpayā vabhāra sattvaṁ
saṁsuddhaṁ sad-asad idaṁ vibhāti yatra.* 5.25.10 ab.

⁵⁴ *tvam eva bhagavann etac chiva-śaktyoḥ sarūpayoḥ.
viśvaṁ sṛjasi pāsyatsi kṛdān ūṇa-ṣaḥ yathā..* 4.6.43.

⁵⁵ *ṣaḍ ime prākṛtāḥ sargā vaikṛtān api me śṛṇu.
rajo-bhājo bhagavato līleyaṁ hari-medhasaḥ..* 3.10.18.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THIRD GRADE

BHAGAVAT

When spontaneous divine creativity assumes definiteness, the Absolute is pronounced as all-bliss characterised by all powers. This is *Bhagavān* of the *Bhāgavata*.¹ Analogous to the child indulging in sports with his own shadows merely for the sake of his own pleasure,² *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata* indulges in sports with the cowherd women (*gopīs*) to satisfy his mirthful nature (*reme*). The *Bhāgavata* equates Śrī-Kṛṣṇa with *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality³ and the cowherd women with its infinite powers.⁴ The climax of Divine Sport is reached when the all-blissful nature of *Bhagavān* finds its consummation in what the *Bhāgavata* calls "*rāsa-līlā*". The sport is the expression of divine love (*preman*) because the Kṛṣṇa-concept, as we shall see, emerged to accentuate the aspect of love between Viṣṇu and *Ramā*. The privilege of special favour which *Ramā* enjoyed in relation to *Vaikuṇṭha-pati* in the midst of other women of *Vaikuṇṭha* is maintained in the *Bhāgavata*. For, the *Bhāgavata* describes how Kṛṣṇa suddenly disappears in the company of one woman who thus became an object of envy when the searching party of girls traced her foot-step mingled with that of Kṛṣṇa.⁵ But though privileged, she was still "a cowherd girl" (*yā gopī*),⁶ one among other cowherd girls. Her recognition as "*Śrī-Rādhā*" in the central stream of the *Bhāga-*

¹ *tvaṁ pratyag-ātmani tadā bhagavatyanante.*
ānanda-mātra upaṇanna-samasta-śaktau... 4.11.30 ab.

² *reme vrajēśo vraja-sundirībhiḥ.*
yathā'r bhakāḥ sva-partibimba-vibhramaḥ... 10.33.16 cd.

³ *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam.* 1.3.28 b.

⁴ *tābhir vidhūta-śokābhir bhagavān acyuto vṛtaḥ.*
vyarocatādhikam tāta puruṣaḥ śaktibhir yathā... 10.32.10.

⁵ *anayā'rādhito nūnam bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ.*
yan no viḥāya govindaḥ prito yām anayat rahaḥ... 10.30.28.

⁶ *yām gopīm anayat kṛṣṇo viḥāyā'nyāḥ striyo vane...* 10.30.36 cd.

vata cult was an innovation later than the *Bhāgavata* although the Bengal School of *Vaiṣṇavism* is at pains to elicit the “*Śrī-Rādhā*”-concept from the verse “*anayā rādhito nūnaṁ bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ*.” So, in the *Bhāgavata* the infinite powers of *Bhagavān* are represented in their originality in the form of cowherd girls who could claim equal share of Kṛṣṇa’s love; and, Kṛṣṇa had to assume as many forms as there were cowherd girls in the “*rāsa-līlā*” so that each one of them could have Kṛṣṇa as her own.⁷ That all these infinite powers in the garb of the cowherd girls were but the manifestations of one spiritual principle (*Yoga-māyā*) is suggested by the *Bhāgavata* when it opens the five chapters on Divine Sport (*rāsa-pañcā’dhyāyī*) with the remark that *Bhagavān* resorted to *Yoga-māyā* with a view to indulging in sports.⁸ Thus while Kṛṣṇa was the third grade of Reality, the cowherd girls were *Yoga-māyā*. Lastly, the spiritual abode in which Divine Sport unfolded itself is, to the *Bhāgavata*, “*go-kula*” (cow-stall) or “*vraja*” (cow-pen) reminiscent of the mysterious cows and their stall of the *Ṛg-Veda*, to be mentioned later on as related to Viṣṇu.

The *Vedic* elements of the Viṣṇu cult which was fast moving to the evolution of the Kṛṣṇa concept found their fulfilment in the formulation of a sublime philosophy, incorporated in the first nine *skandhas* (books) of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. The fundamentals of such philosophy were then converted by the *Bhāgavata* in its tenth *skandha* (book) into a biography—the full-fledged life of Kṛṣṇa—the threads of which can still be traced to their originals. For example, Viṣṇu’s form with a sacrificial thread was responsible for Kṛṣṇa’s birth at the *Kṣatriya* family of Vasudeva. But Viṣṇu’s original association with the cows was too fundamental to leave him with Vasudeva for long. So, in the very night of birth Kṛṣṇa was transferred to “*Vraja*” where he was brought up as a cowherd boy. To the world at large, then, Kṛṣṇa was known to be a native of “*Vraja*” and from this point of view his birth as the son of Vasudeva was just an acci-

⁷ *rāsotsavaḥ sampravṛtto gopī-maṇḍala-maṇḍitaḥ. yogeśvaraṇa kṛṣṇeṇa tādaṁ madhye dvayor dvayoḥ*.. 10.33.3 ab.

⁸ *bhagavān api tā rātriḥ śaradotphulla-mallikāḥ. vikṣya tantuṁ manasī cakre yoga-māyām upāśritaḥ*.. 10.29.1.

dent. It is the mere recognition of the association of Kṛṣṇa-concept with the revival of *Brāhmaṇism*. Nanda, Devakī, the associates of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd girls are all but the forms of Kṛṣṇa⁹ brought about by *Yoga-māyā*.¹⁰ They are all brought into existence in the process of the elaboration of the "*Vraja*"-concept. To complete the story, the exploits of Viṣṇu are represented by the slaughter of a host of demons by Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu's three abodes by Kṛṣṇa's residence at Mathurā and Dvārakā also. Viṣṇu's simultaneity of residence at all the three abodes is kept alive in the idea that Kṛṣṇa had never left "*Vraja*" even when he went to Mathurā to curve the power of Kamsa, his maternal uncle.

Seen in this light one can solve the enigma: Why should Kṛṣṇa be established as the supreme Reality though the *Bhāgavata* extols Viṣṇu to be the goal of all the *Vedas*? The answer is that Kṛṣṇa is none else than Viṣṇu with certain refinements. Viṣṇu, in his earlier phase, stood both for creation and love. He is later on left with his creative activity while his other aspect viz, love is represented by Kṛṣṇa. In the *Bhāgavata* love occupies the highest rank although the other sentiments like servitude and paternal affection are not altogether absent.

YOGA-MĀYĀ

The power of Kṛṣṇa is *Yoga-māyā* which is always at his command.¹¹ In terms of metaphysics, *Yoga-māyā* is innate with the Absolute, the third grade of Reality.¹² It provides for the expression of the free creativity of the Absolute, the enjoyment of its own ecstasy. In other words, it is the principle that makes for the sports of the Divine.¹³ Now this sportive instinct of *Bhagavān* is realised in the eye of the enlightened in the concept of the manifestation of all-bliss or "*rāsa-līlā*" and *Yoga-*

⁹ *adyaiva tvad ṛte'sya kiṁ mama na te māyātvam ādaritam
eko'si prathamam tato vraja-suhṛd-vatsāḥ samastā api.
tāvanto'si catur-bhujās tad akhilaiḥ sākam mayopāsitāḥ
tāvantyeva jagantyabhūḥ tad amṛtam brahmā'dvayam śiṣyate. . 10.14.18.*

¹⁰ *iti prabhāṣya tam devī māyā bhagavatī bhuvi.
bahūnām aniketeṣu bahu-nāmā vabhūva ha. . 10.4.13.*

¹¹ *taṁ tathā-vyasanam dṛṣtvā bhagavān vṛjijārdanaḥ.
dūrāt pratyudiyād bhūtvā vaṭuko yoga-māyayā. . 10.88.27.*

¹² *vedāham aṅga paramasya hi yoga-māyām. . 2.7.43 a.*

¹³ *atha te bhagaval-līlā yoga-māyopabṛhmhitāḥ. . 3.5.22 ab.*

māyā is materialised into that type of sport.¹⁴ In the eye of the empirical man *Yoga-māyā* appears as the physical world¹⁵ and man's bondage¹⁶ therein. But *Yoga-māyā* does not exhaust itself in the physical world and man's bondage. On the one hand it is identified with the principle of creation and the principle of bondage while on the other it provides for the supernatural power that defies the natural laws,¹⁷ the laws of the mind¹⁸ and even transcends the realm of empiricism into the sphere of spiritual existence.¹⁹

Thus *Yoga-māyā* is the meeting ground of two opposite forces. On the one hand it helps to maintain the social discipline²⁰ while on the other it reveals divine majesties by the elimination of worldly pleasures.²¹ As the compromise of both *yoga* or *pārameṣṭhya* (majesty)²² and *Māyā* i.e., the principle which, according to the *Bhāgavata*, is responsible both for the physical world and the bondage of the soul, the *Bhāgavata* calls this principle legitimately as *Yoga-māyā*.

Herein lies the genius of the *Bhāgavata* to conceive *Yoga-māyā* in all its wealth, distinguished from the *Prakṛti* of the *Sāṃkhya* School. While *Prakṛti* of the latter explains merely the physical world, concept of *Yoga-māyā* is forged to interpret both the physical world as well as the bondage of the individual

¹⁴ *bhagavān api tā rātriḥ larodotphulla-mallikāḥ.
vikṛya rantuṃ manāś cakre yoga-māyāṃ upāśritaḥ...* 10.29.1.

¹⁵ *dravyaṃ vayaḥ karma guṇān vileṣaṃ
yad yoga-māyāṃ ahitāṃ vadanti.
yad dur-vibhāvyāṃ prabudhā'pabādham
prasīdatāṃ naḥ sa mahā-vibhūtiḥ...* 8.5.43.

¹⁶ *yoga-māyā-vāsanayā deha imāṃ jagatiṃ abhimānā'bhāṣena saṃkra-
mamānaḥ.* 5.6.7.

¹⁷ *evaṃ saṃcoditau mātṛā rāmaḥ kṛjṇaś ca bhārata.
sutalaṃ saṃvivivatur yoga-māyāṃ upāśritau...* 10.85.34.

¹⁸ *bhagavāns tad abhijñāya girilo yoga-māyā
āviśat tad guhā'kāśaṃ vāyus chidraṃ ivelvaraḥ...* 12.10.10.

¹⁹ *tad viśva-gurvadhikṛtaṃ bhuvanaika-vandyaṃ
divyaṃ vicitra-vibudhā'gra-vimāna-lociḥ.
āpuḥ paraṃ mudam apūrvac upetya yoga-
māyā-balena munayaḥ tad atho vikupṭham...* 3.15.26.

²⁰ *ākāṣaṃ eja evaṃ gato bhagavān ātma-yoga-māyā-viracita-vividha-
loka-yātrā-gopīthāyetyarthaḥ...* 5.20.41.

²¹ *niṣṇātaṃ yoga-māyāsu munim svāyambhavaṃ manum.
yad bhraṃśayitum bhogā na lekur bhagavat-param...* 3.22.34.

²² *te yoga-māyayā'rabdha-pārameṣṭhya-mahodayam
procuḥ prāñjalayo viprāḥ prahṛṣṭāḥ kupita-tvacaḥ.* 3.16.15.

souls, and also the spiritual world of eternal bliss that satisfies the demand of religion and ethics. In the light of the *Bhāgavata*, *Yoga-māyā* from the ultimate point of view provides for the highest good—the realisation of perfect bliss. From the empirical point of view, on the other hand, it includes the concepts of *Cit-śakti* (the principle of liberation) and *Māyā* which manifests itself, according to the *Bhāgavata*, into *Guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* or *Prakṛti* (responsible for creation) and *Avidyā* (the principle of bondage). That *Yoga-māyā* developed out of the concept of *Prakṛti* adopted by the *Sāṃkhya* is also borne out by the *Bhāgavata* which actually designates the principle providing for Divine Sport as *Prakṛti*.²³

Logical categories presuppose certain postulates. For example, an effect is dependent upon some conditions. It is brought into existence in a definite manner and in certain numbers. It is also confined to a specific period of time and a particular space. *Yoga-māyā* which incorporates the freedom of the Absolute does not suffer from these limitations. It defies space-time scheme. Of its own it expresses itself in numberless manners and forms, untrammelled by any logical considerations. It is not illogical because it makes the operation of logic possible. It is thus alogical. The concept of spontaneous transformation, present in *Prakṛti* of the *Sāṃkhya* School, is also the key-note of *Yoga-māyā* of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*.²⁴

The *Śaiva*, *Śākta* and the *Vaiṣṇava* Schools are at one to explain creation by recognising power in Reality. The *Bhāgavata* has tried to explain both creation and emancipation by the concept of *Yoga-māyā*. Even in this the *Vaiṣṇavism* of the *Bhāgavata* is supported by *Śāktaism* and *Śaivism*. So, in the conception of *Yoga-māyā* the *Bhāgavata* was drawing upon a common tradition. This is borne out by the fact that *Vaiṣṇavī*, *Nārāyaṇī*, *Kṛṣṇā* or *Mādhavī* of the *Vaiṣṇavas* is held by the *Bhāgavata* to be identical with *Durgā*, *Bhadrakālī*, *Vijayā*, *Kumudā*, *Caṇḍikā*, *Kanyakā* or *Māyā* of the *Śāktas*, and with *Īśānī*, *Śārādā*, *Ambikā* of the *Śaivas*; all these are, according

²³ *sva-sukham upagate kvacid vihartum prakṛtim upēyujī yad bhava-pravāhaḥ*.. 1.9.32.

²⁴ *kva vā katham vā kati vā kadeti vistārayan kṛdasi yoga-māyām*.. 10.14.21 cd.

to the *Bhāgavata*, synonyms of *Yoga-māyā*.²³ This recognition shows on the one hand the synthetic approach of the *Bhāgavata* as well as the sanction of the concept of *Yoga-māyā* by all the three Schools.

GOLOKA

As the biography of Kṛṣṇa will be examined in some details in the wider context of metaphysical perspective, the concept of *Goloka* requires a word here. In so far as the *Bhāgavata* has lavished its imageries on the description of "Vraja" which is nothing but the pictorial representation of *Goloka*, it has chosen to remain almost silent over the latter as such excepting its casual reference.²⁴ The descriptions of *Goloka* as such are found in the *Brahma-Saṁhitā*, *Bṛhat-Bhāgavatā'mṛta*, *Sāṭ-sandarbhā*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* of the *Padma-Purāṇa*, the *Hari-varṇa*, the *Gautamīya-Tantra* and other works.

²³ *nāmadheyāni kurvanti sthānāni ca narā bhuri.*
durgeti bhadra-kālīti vijayā vaiṣṇavīti ca..
kumudā caṇḍikā kṛṣṇā mādhaṇī kanyaketi ca.
māyā nārāyaṇīlāni śāradyambiketi ca.. 10.2.11-12.

²⁴ *ācchidyā kīrtiṁ so-slokaṁ vitatya hyañjasā nu kau.*
tamo'nayā tariṣyantiṭyagāt svaṁ padam itvaraḥ.. 11.1.7 vide also 11.31.6.

CHAPTER IV

KṚṢṆA, THE MAHĀ-VISṆU

THE ISSUE

The excellence of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, as the *Purāṇa* itself declares, lies in its exclusive concern with *Śrī-Bhagavān* to whom the work owes its designation, "*Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*". "Kṛṣṇa is no other than *Bhagavān* Himself"—is the dictum which the *Bhāgavata* has propounded, with all emphasis at its command, at the beginning. This proclamation is important; for, the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, the most notable of all the eighteen *Mahā-Purāṇas*, is the practical demonstration of a sublime philosophy of religion, incorporated in the rather pithy statement:—"Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam".¹ So, to examine the processes which eventually led to the affirmation of this truth is to probe into the evolution of thought which gradually but inevitably solidifies itself into what we now call the high metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata* cult which has, so widely and for so many centuries, captured the religious imagination of Indian humanity.

Although a logical analysis of the dictum is not intended here but one cannot ignore the suggestive value of the logical form in which it is presented: Kṛṣṇa is *Bhagavān*. If it is not a case of tautology then "Kṛṣṇa" has to be different from "*Bhagavān*". Yet "is" indicates a very close link, in fact, identity between the two. It therefore suggests a story how Kṛṣṇa outlives himself, or rather, transcends himself to attain the lofty status of *Bhagavān*. But was Kṛṣṇa a historical fact at all? The question has raged in the mind of modern scholars. Barth,² Hopkins³ and Keith⁴ who early probed into the question gave their verdict in the negative. Barth found Kṛṣṇa as a popular

¹ *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* 1.3.28 b.

² Barth, *Religions of India*, London, 1906 p. 166.

³ Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, Boston, 1908, pp. 388, 467.

⁴ Keith *RPVU* p. 262.

solar deity, Hopkins as the patron god of the *Pāṇḍavas* while Keith as a deity of vegetation. But later research has challenged this position. Hill,⁶ Ray Chowdhury⁷ and others have, on the weighty evidences of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*,⁸ *Ghaṭa-jātaka* and *Uttarādhyaṇa-sūtra*,⁹ recognised Kṛṣṇa as a historical reality, who had flourished not later than 900 B.C.,¹⁰ perhaps a little earlier. It is now more or less accepted that in the *Vṛṣṇi* branch of the *Sātvata* family, Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, was born; that he had acquired *Brahma-vidyā* (the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*) from Ghora Āṅgīrasa; and that he had played a vital role in the great *Mahābhārata* war, to mention a few of the cardinal points of Kṛṣṇa's biography.

On the other hand, *Bhagavān* of the *Bhāgavata* is the highest metaphysical reality. As the definition goes, *Bhagavān* is all-bliss (*ānanda-mātra*) and is the perennial source of all powers (*upapanna-samasta-śakti*);¹¹ further, *Bhagavān* is non-dual consciousness, tranquil (*praśānta*) and pure (*śuddha*), the being that has transcended the pragmatism of cause and effect (*sad-asataḥ param*).¹² In short, *Bhagavān* is the highest metaphysical reality, who also embodies the highest fulfilment of all spiritual aspirations, the *summum bonum* revealed by the successful performance of what the *Bhāgavata* calls "*parama-dharma*" (supreme religion).

How could the historical Kṛṣṇa be elevated to this sublime status of *Bhagavān*, the perfect synthesis of the highest of philosophy and the highest of religion? By what stages were data, connected with the life of the historical Kṛṣṇa, absorbed in and also superseded by the totality of the ideal Kṛṣṇa? What main

⁶ Hill, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, p. 5.

⁷ Ray Chowdhury, *Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Sect*, pp. 30-31.

⁸ *Ch U* 3.17.6.

⁹ *Uttarādhyaṇa-sūtra*, Lecture XXII.

¹⁰ Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 175-182.

¹¹ ... *pratyag-ātmani tadā bhagavatyanante ānanda-mātra upapanna-samasta-śaktau*.. 4.11.30ab.

¹² *śaśvat praśāntam abhayaṁ partibodha-mātram śuddhaṁ samaṁ sad-asataḥ param ātma-tattvam śabdo na yatra puru-kāraka-vān kriyārtho māyā paraityabhimukhe ca vilajjamānā tad vai padam bhagavataḥ paramasya puṁso brahmeti yad vidur aśra-sukhaṁ vi-lokam*.. 2.7.47.

tributaries of facts, myths and ideas had fed the mundane career of the historical Kṛṣṇa and thus had assisted the process of his ideal metamorphosis? To put all these questions in a condensed form, how could the historical be converted into the ideal? The present chapter is addressed to the task of suggesting the lines along which the study of the evolution of the Kṛṣṇa-Bhagavān concept could develop into an interesting and profitable pursuit.

THE FIRST PHASE

Fortunately, some passages¹² of the *Bhāgavata* throw useful light on this issue. It is stated therein that *Bhagavān* assumes different colours, names and forms in different ages, and the method of worship changes accordingly. Thus in the *Kṛta* (golden age) *Bhagavān* is white, four-handed and has the appearance of a *Brahmacārin* with a sacrificial thread. He is

12

rājovāca

kasmin kāle sa bhagavān kiṁ-varṇaḥ kīdrśo nybhiḥ.
nāmnā vā kena vidhinā pūjyate tad ihocyatām..

śrī-kara-bhājana uvāca

kṛtaṁ tretā dvāparaṁ ca kalir ityeṣu keśavaḥ.
nānā-varṇā'bhidhā'kāro nānāiva vidhinejyate..
kṛte suklaś catur-bāhur jaṭilo valkalā'mbarah.
kṛṣṇā'jinopavitāksān bibhṛad daṇḍa-kamaṇḍalū..
manuṣyās tu tadā śāntā nir-vairāḥ suhṛdaḥ samāḥ.
yajanti tapasā devaṁ śamena ca damena ca.
haṁsaḥ suparṇo vaikunṭho dharmo योगेश्वरो'malah.
īśvaraḥ puruṣo'vyaktaḥ paramātmēti gīyate..
tretāyāṁ rakta-varṇo'sau catur-bāhus tri-mekhalah..
hiraṇya-keśaś trayyātmā sruk-sruvā'dyupalakṣaṇah..
taṁ tadā manuṣā devaṁ sarva-deva-mayaṁ harim.
yajanti vidyayā trayyā dharmīṣṭhā brahma-vādinah..
viṣṇur yajñāḥ pṛīni-garbhah sarva-deva uru-kramah
vṛṣā-kapir jayantaś ca uru-gāya itīryate..
dvāpare bhagavān śyāmaḥ pīta-vāsā nijā'yudhaḥ.
śrīvatsā'dibhir aṅkaiś ca lakṣaṇair upalakṣitaḥ..
taṁ tadā puruṣaṁ martyā mahārājopalakṣaṇam.
yajanti veda-tantrābhyāṁ param jijnāsavō nṛpa..
namas te vāsudevāya namaḥ saṁkarṣaṇāya ca.
pradyumnāyā'niruddhāya tubhyaṁ bhagavate namaḥ..
nārāyaṇāya īśāye puruṣāya mahātmāne.
viśveśvarāya viśvāya sarva-bhūtā'tmane namaḥ..
iti dvāpara urvīla stuvanti jagad-īśvaram.
nānā-tantra-vidhānena kalāvapi yathā śṛṇu..
kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣā'kṛṣṇaṁ sāṅgopāṅgā'stra-pāśadam.
yajñaiḥ saṁkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ..
dhyeyaṁ sadā paribhava-ghnam abhiṣṭa-doham
tīrthāṣpadaṁ śiva-virīñci-nutaṁ śaraṇyam.
bhṛtyā'rtti-dam praṇata-pāla bhavā'b'dhi-potam
vande mahā-puruṣa te caraṇā'ravindam.. 11.5.19-33

vide also 10.8.13-19.

then called "*hamsa*", "*suparṇa*", "*Īśvara*", "*Puruṣa*", "*Avyakta*", "*Paramātmān*" and so on. People are then harmless by nature and they worship Him with *Tapas*, having restrained their mind and body. In the *Tretā* (silver age) *Bhagavān* is red, four-handed and has three girdles. He embodies the three *Vedas* and is marked by the various ceremonial articles like *śruc*, *śruvā* etc. People worship Him with the help of the three *Vedas*. *Bhagavān* is then the embodiment of all gods. "*Viṣṇu*", "*Yajña*" "*Pr̥ṣṇi-garbha*" are some of His different appellations. But *Bhagavān* changes His colour into dark (*śyāma*) in the next age, *Dvāpara* (copper age). He then wears a yellow garment, put on arms and is marked by jewels like *Kaustubha* and other tokens. People worship His grand person of the sovereign (*mahārāja*) with the help of the *Vedas* and the *Tantras*. He is then designated "*Vāsudeva*", "*Nārāyaṇa ṛṣi*", "*Puruṣa*" and so on. Lastly, in *Kali* (iron age) *Bhagavān* assumes the designation "*Kṛṣṇa*" because of His black colour. He is then found with proportionate limbs (*aṅga*), different ornaments on His body (*upāṅga*), weapons (*astra*) and companions (*pārṣada*). People call Him "*Mahā-Puruṣa*"—the Great Person—a designation which includes also Rāmacandra. He is worshipped by a different kind of sacrifice (*yajña*) with emphasis on invocations and recitals of names (*saṁkīrtana*).

Now, let us read the implications of the passages from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. They take us, at the outset, to a period of history, called "*Kṛta*" which might originally mean a "winning throw", as suggested by Macdonell, but which, for all practical purposes, was the golden age of the *Ṛg-Veda*. The oppositions from the aborigines have now ceased and a new era of peace and prosperity has dawned upon the Aryans. After the nightmare of struggles and strifes, so palpably reflected in the Indra hymns, new hopes and brilliant prospective future have opened up before the eyes of a young race. The *Ṛg-Veda* is the mature fruit of the imaginative mind which took wings in such encouraging atmosphere. The young Aryans found a replica of their blooming mental horizon in the beauty and charm unfolded by the physical sky (*dyau*) with the aid of the sun which arose in the eastern horizon, came gradually to the top and then steadily reclined to the west. The eye of the sky—the sun—sees all in-

cluding the deeds of men.¹³ As the tangible symbol of a new era radiating with heat and brilliance, the sun was readily transformed into the sun-god. In his physical aspect the sun-god (*Sūrya*) dispelled darkness and declared his triumph over the 'dark evils', while as the creative power the golden god (*Savitṛ*) drove men to action. The assimilative process, tending towards monotheism on the one hand and pantheism on the other, soon moulded *Sūrya* and *Savitṛ* into one as they represented two facets of the same reality viz, the blazing sun. It is conceivable that "*Puruṣa*" of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*¹⁴ is a personification of the sun-god. The sun with thousand rays might have plausibly gone into the composition of the thousand-headed *Puruṣa*, with addition of new materials not to be found in the sun-god. That the thousand-headed *Puruṣa* was still an unfinished product is brought home by the fact that being man he has two hands while being the sun-god he has one thousand heads. So, *Puruṣa* is man in the making. In this evolution of the sun-god towards the direction of *Puruṣa*, Viṣṇu's solar personality acquires a special value. The concept of Viṣṇu responds to the aspirations of man. He is the god of prosperity, the protector of man,¹⁵ sustainer of moral order and bestower of auspicious will in man.¹⁶ Viṣṇu is the last limit of majesty.¹⁷ But Viṣṇu is not only the god of peace but he is also the god of war. He is a venerable friend of Indra and had helped him in many an exploit.¹⁸ A valiant person vast in body, Viṣṇu is no longer a child¹⁹ and possesses an exquisitely beautiful body. As a result of fusion, *Sūrya* and *Savitṛ* became one;²⁰ and *Savitṛ* who had already

¹³ *ud u tyam jāta-vedasam devam vahanti ketavaḥ
dye vītvāya sūryam.* RV 1.50.1.

¹⁴ *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, RV 10.90.

¹⁵ *ato devā avantu no yato viṣṇur vicakrame.* ibid. 1.22.16.

¹⁶ *ṛtasya garbham januṣā pīpartana.
mahas te viṣṇo sumatīm bhajāmahe.* ibid. 1.156.3ad.

¹⁷ *na te viṣṇo jāyamāno na jāto
deva mahimnaḥ param antam āpa.* ibid. 7.99.2ab.

¹⁸ *indrasya yuyyaḥ sakhā.* ibid. 1.22.19c.

¹⁹ *bhṛac-charīro vimimāna rkkabhir
juvā kumāraḥ pratyetyāhavam.* ibid. 1.155.6cd.

²⁰ *sūrya-raśmir harikeśaḥ purastāt
savitā jyotir udayan aśasram.* ibid. 10.139.1ab.

two golden hands²¹ merged with *Puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* and Viṣṇu had much in common. Viṣṇu had three strides by which he would cover the three worlds which are also incorporated in the being of *Puruṣa*. Viṣṇu had his transcendental existence (*parama-pada*); so had *Puruṣa* (*atyatiṣṭhat daśāṅgulam*) and so on. So the four deities fused into one, resulting in the emergence of Viṣṇu with a much richer personality. As the triumphant god of the fair-looking Aryans, he was white (*śukla*). He was now "haṁsa", the white swan,²² "suparṇa", the golden bird,²³ "dharma" in his own right, "puruṣa", the radiant (*amala*), all-powerful (*īśvara*) and great soul (*paramātmā*) that creates all,²⁴ sees all and protects all raising aloft his strong golden hands with which he blesses and rouses all beings.^{24a}

A problem arises at this point regarding the feature of Viṣṇu with four hands. As far as we could see Viṣṇu as *Puruṣa* did have two hands. We come across four-handed Viṣṇu in the *Khila*,²⁵ which is a late accretion to the *Ṛg-Veda*. Did the *Bhāgavata* take this *Khila* under consideration and recognise the four-handed Viṣṇu to be the standard Viṣṇu form? Of course, in the *Bhāgavata* itself three forms of Viṣṇu—two-handed, four-handed and eight-handed—are mentioned. Of these, definite preference is shown for the four-handed Viṣṇu whom the *Bhāgavata* describes whenever it has opportunity to do so. Does the *Bhāgavata* generalise this form even with regard to the earlier concept of Viṣṇu, which is now being discussed? In fact, in all the phases of the evolution of the Viṣṇu-concept under consideration, this four-handed form has been taken by the *Bhāgavata* to be the norm. Although the four-handed is expressly mentioned by the *Bhāgavata* only with regard to the concept of Viṣṇu in "*Kṛta*" and "*Tretā*" yet one might plausibly say from the trend of description concerning "*Dvāpara*" and

²¹ *adveṣo hastayor dadhe.* *ibid.* 1.24.4c.

hiraṇya-pāṇiḥ savitā. *ibid.* 1.35.9a.

²² *haṁsaḥ śuci-jat.* *ibid.* 4.40.5a.

²³ *dīvyam suparṇam vayasām bhāntam.* *ibid.* 1.164.52a.

²⁴ *vāta-jūto yo abhīrakṣati tmanā
prajāḥ puṣoṣa puru-dhā vi rājati.* *ibid.* 10.170.1d.

^{24a} *visvāśya hi śruṣṭaye deva ūrdhvaḥ
pra bāhavā pṛthu-pāṇiḥ sisarti.* RV 2.38.2ab.

²⁵ *omkāram catur-bhujam loka-nātham nārāyaṇam.* *ibid.* *Khila* 33.22ab.
after RV 10.166.

"Kali" that the four-handed is presumed in these cases as well. For example, weapons are mentioned both in "*Dvāpara*" and "*Kali*". How can a god have weapons unless he has hands? That the number of hands in such cases were four is borne out by the fact, among others, that the historical Kṛṣṇa whom we propose to equate with this form of Viṣṇu of "*Dvāpara*" and "*Kali*" was born four-handed and also died four-handed.

In that golden age life was simple and this simplicity is reflected in the method of worship of Viṣṇu. According to the *Bhāgavata*—and this is confirmed by *Vedic* evidences—*Tapas* which, according to the commentator Śrīdhara, means meditation (*dhyāna*),²⁶ was the method of propitiating Viṣṇu. If we take "*Tapas*" as a simple case of reflection as suggested by V. Bhattacharya,²⁷ worship of Viṣṇu at that period was an unadulterated mental phenomenon—meditation leading to knowledge²⁸—to which apparently everybody was entitled. All that was required by way of equipment was the restraint of mind and body (*śama* and *dama*).

Thus at the first epoch Viṣṇu, the native god of India, was raised, by the process of assimilation, to the status of supreme godhood, that not only included the three worlds but also maintained existence of his own, side by side with other gods still holding their own grounds.

THE SECOND PHASE

The word "fusion" requires some explanation at this stage. As indicated before, the dynamic mind of the Hindus, reflected in the *Rg-Veda*, has moved in two definite directions which may be described as monotheistic and pantheistic. Under the monotheistic direction the *Rg-Vedic* gods were steadily merging their individualistic differences if their characters could logically be harmonised under the same reality. The pantheistic trend, on the other hand, became more and more pronounced in the identification of God with the world—God in whom the world could find a secure shelter. As a natural result of monotheistic operation, *Sūrya* and *Savitṛ*—representing the material and the

²⁶ *tapasā = dhyānena*—Śrīdhara on 11.5.22.

²⁷ *IHQ* Vol. IX p. 105.

²⁸ *yasya jñāna-mayaṁ tapaḥ*. *Mun U* 1.1.9.

spiritual aspects respectively—resolved into one being viz, the sun-god, because both were, at their basis, nothing but the sun. Similarly, the Cosmic Man and Viṣṇu were coherently united under the concept, “*Puruṣa*”. But such grouping seems to have taken another turn in response to the emphasis laid on the physical or the spiritual aspect. Thus, as physical realities *Sūrya* and Cosmic Man (*Puruṣa*) came together while on the basis of morality and spiritualism *Savitṛ* and Viṣṇu coalesced. As a result, *Sūrya-Puruṣa* and *Savitṛ-Viṣṇu* came into existence; and, as they represented the physical and the spiritual respectively the further fusion of *Sūrya-Puruṣa* and *Savitṛ-Viṣṇu* gave rise to the concept of reality as being both immanent and transcendent. But fusion has been an unending process; it has never been able to achieve complete identity between the emergent and its prototype, resulting in the radical effacement of the latter. Thus when the Viṣṇu concept evolved almost to the point of losing its original identity, the sun-god—or rather, the physical sun which was the primordial basis of *Sūrya-Puruṣa-Savitṛ-Viṣṇu*—came to the help of Viṣṇu by impinging on him the special mark like “*Śrīvatsa*”—the circular mole—reminiscent of his solar origin. Fusion is thus a complex process—both introspective and retrospective—which has moulded *Sūrya-Puruṣa-Savitṛ-Viṣṇu* into a supreme being—the four-handed Viṣṇu of the *Bhāgavata* that responds, in its immanent aspect, to cosmological enquiries and religious cravings for a personal god, and, in its transcendental aspect, to sublime philosophy.

When Viṣṇu had risen to the high altitude of personal eminence the golden age of the *Ṛg-Veda* was gradually replaced by hieratical ritualism, prescribed by a separate set of literature—the *Brāhmaṇas*. An important god in the *Vedic* pantheon, Agni with its three births²² occupied the central place on the sacrificial altar, distributed in three forms—*Gārhapatya*, *Āhavanīya* and *Dakṣiṇa*. Agni became the representatives of other gods and his previous eminence was thus retained. But above all reigned “*yajña*” (sacrifice) to which everything including the gods became subordinated. On the other hand, in the field of speculations, Viṣṇu was too high to escape the attention of the priests. So, sacrifice as a physical act and Viṣṇu as the object of contem-

²² *agne devān ihā vaha sādāyā yoniṣu triṣu*. RV 1.15.4ab.

plation challenged the status of each other and such conflict was eventually resolved in the recognition of identity between the two. The *Taittirīya-Saṁhitā* records such identity.³⁰ By the time of the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* such identity is an established fact.³¹ Already in the first epoch Viṣṇu, because of his intimate association with *Puruṣa-Sūkta* which is the earliest evidence of the caste system, had become a *Brahmacārīn* and, as a *Brāhmaṇic* god, the holder of sacrificial thread, as the *Bhāgavata* tells us. So the next step is to find him as the sacrificer. Gods frequently take his help to fight against the *Asuras* and the feature which still plays a very important part in increasing Viṣṇu's power and eminence is his three steps.³² By the time of the *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa* Viṣṇu is the highest god³³ who embodies in himself all the other gods (*sarva-deva*), fire-god being no exception to it. Naturally Viṣṇu is red (*rakta* or *kapiśa*), marked by the three sacrificial girdles (*tri-mekhala*) symbolising the three fires, and is indicated by the sacrificial articles like (*sruc*, *sruvā* etc.). It may be conceived that the germ of identification between *Puruṣa* and *yajña*, to be found in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, became clearly pronounced and re-affirmed when Viṣṇu not only became the sacrifice but also *Yajña-puruṣa*,³⁴ who still retained his old characteristics—two hands, golden body, the appellations like *uṣu-krama*, *viṣā-kapi*, *pr̥ṣni-garbha* etc.,—although the *Bhāgavata* describes, in the passages under consideration, the form of Viṣṇu as four-handed.

Apparently, during this second epoch the authenticity of the three *Vedas*—*Yajus* and *Sāman*, besides the *Ṛc*—was at its zenith. And the period marked by the supremacy of the three *Vedas* should naturally be designated as "*Tretā*"—the period of

³⁰ *yajño vai viṣṇuḥ*. TS 1.7.4.19.

³¹ *yajño vai viṣṇuḥ*. SB 1.4.1.3.

³² *viṣṇuḥ sarvā devatāḥ trīr hidaṁ viṣṇur vyakramata*. AiB. 1.1.

³³ *om agnir vai devatānām avamo viṣṇuḥ paramaḥ*. AiB. 1.1.

³⁴ *atha ha tam (bhagavantam yajña-puruṣam vide 5.3.1.) āviṣkṛta-bhujayugala-dvayam hiraṇmayam puruṣa-viśeṣam kapiśa-kauṣeyāmbara-dharām vilasac-chrivatsa-lalāmaṁ daravara-vanaruha-vanamālā-cchuryāmṛtamaṇi-gaḍā'dibhir upalakṣitam sphuṣa-kiraṇa-pravaramaṇi-maya-mukuta-kunḍala-kafaka-kafisūtra-hāra-keyūra-nūpurā'dyaṅga-bhūṣaṇa-vibhūṣitam r̥tvik-sadasya-grhapatayo'dhanā ivottama-dhanam upalabhya sa-bahumānam arhaṇenā'vanata-śiṣṇāna upatasthuḥ*. 5.3.3.

the three fires and the three *Vedas*. Besides the *Ṛc*, the *Yajus* and the *Sāman* were also accepted in the *Brāhmaṇical* fold in so far as they substantially incorporated the *Ṛc* with certain innovations which were more or less adaptations to suit the cause of sacrifice. But the *Atharva-Veda* abounding in contents of a different character was refused admission to this "holy trinity" (*Trayī*).

Sacrifice was then the order of the period and *Viṣṇu* by his identification with sacrifice not only saved himself from total eclipse but emerged in a richer form as the only god of worship before whom all the other gods including the great *Varuṇa* and *Indra* pale into insignificance. They had now to content themselves by being the god of waters and the god of thunderbolt respectively.

THE THIRD PHASE

But the exclusive character of *Vedic* ritualism could not survive for long. Dry materialism which denied the demands of man's emotional nature and was pent up in privileged confines had to come to terms with life in the wider sphere. The non-Aryan wealth of ideas, that now voiced the feeling and thinking of the bulk of the Indian people, was too strong and insistent to be discarded. On the contrary, the weakness of *Vedic* ritualism could be removed if such new life was embraced. So not only the *Atharva-Veda* but the *Tantras* (so called, because they regulated the conduct of the common mass) or *Āgamas* (innovations) as distinguished from *Nigamas* (already existent *Vedas*) were duly recognised as equally authentic and this period was accordingly designated as "*Dvā-para*", paying equal respect and validity to the *Vedas* as well as the *Tantras*.

In the realm of ideas, *Viṣṇu* was constantly mustering strength. His identification with sacrifice and incorporation of all gods gave him unique opportunity to assimilate whatever came under his way. In the *Nāsadiya-Sūkta*²⁵ of the *Ṛg-Veda*, one of the finest specimens of early philosophical speculations, the hermit wondered as to what was there before creation. He imagined that, before all, there was

²⁵ *Nāsadiya-Sūkta*. RV 10.129.

moving water (*apraketaṁ salīlam*), enveloped by darkness (*tamas*) and there was the first principle of life (*ānīt a-vātam*) encased in a shell (*tucchyena abhyapihitam*). Then, by the power of *Tapas*, that life took a concrete shape, had a mind wherefrom emerged the desire to create. But the hermit fumbles over the identity of the primordial creator who produced and moved water itself. He wonders whether that great Lord (*adhyakṣa*) at the highest heaven (*parame vyoman*), who witnesses all, knows the secret. The idea of life concretized within the shell is further developed in another *Sūkta*. The shell is the golden egg (*hiranya-garbha*) wherein stayed the creator of the three worlds (*Prajāpati*). But the mystery about the primordial creator remained still unsolved. The clue suggested in the *Nāsadiya-Sūkta* was gradually taken to mean that Viṣṇu himself was that unique reality. These cosmological speculations gave rise to the following mythology: Before creation, Viṣṇu floated on the surface of the cosmic waters (*kāraṇā'rṇava*); from his naval region arose a golden lotus in which Brahmā (*Prajāpati*) was seated. He found none and resorted to penance (*Tapas*). He mustered strength thereby and then found Viṣṇu and with his permission created the universe. What concerns us here is that Viṣṇu was primordial man (*nara*) who created all including Brahmā; then he entered his creation (*nāra*), and also he rested on the cosmic waters (*nāra*). On these grounds, Viṣṇu acquired the name "*Nārāyaṇa*".³⁶ On the other hand, the hermit *Nārāyaṇa* to whom was revealed "*Puruṣa*" of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* was, in this process of assimilation, deified i.e., he became *Puruṣa*. This means that he became Viṣṇu. This is how *Nārāyaṇa*, the hermit, became *Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu*. So Viṣṇu became *Nārāyaṇa* in more than one sense. In the meantime, *Prajāpati*, who acquired a great status during the *Brāhmaṇa* period, was gradually relegated to a position subordinate to Viṣṇu. *Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa* during the *Brāhmaṇa* period had beheld the world and the gods in him and also his own self in all the world³⁷ and this vision

³⁶ *nārāyaṇas tvam nahi sarva-dehinām
ātma'syadhīśā'khila-loka-sākṣī
nārāyaṇo'ngam nara-bhū-jalā'yanāt
tac cā'pi satyaṁ na tavaiva māyā.*, 10.14.14.

³⁷ SB 12.3.4. 11.

he left for Viṣṇu while merging into his essence. For the *Gītā*³⁹ this vision is the summit of knowledge and for the *Bhāgavata* the possessor of such knowledge is no other than a "*Bhāgavatottama*".⁴⁰

Promotion of a spiritual stalwart to the exalted status of Viṣṇu had thus begun. As referred to before, it was the age of great fusion when two parallel streams of thoughts and feelings had united in the life of Indian population. Kṛṣṇa who, by his mixed birth and mixed culture and above all by his unique personality, could create a new world of his own, was soon deified. From identification with the sun-god, his family deity, he passed on to Viṣṇu and was absorbed in His essence. The first symptom of this absorption is found in the dark colour of Viṣṇu. He was originally white because he was the sun-god. Then, he was red because that was the colour of the god of fire (Agni) and now his colour is changed into black (*ghana-tyāma*). But fusion of Kṛṣṇa into Viṣṇu was the indication of a great movement and its impact on the evolution of Viṣṇu concept cannot be overestimated. The non-Aryan especially the Dravidian grandeur of conception brought about complete orientation of Viṣṇu.⁴⁰ Viṣṇu now had a body well-proportioned, dark and supple, the paragon of beauty and charm, with an enchanting smile on his face. He wears yellow garment with ornaments of pure gold all over his body. He holds in his hands the conch-shell, the wheel, the club and the lotus. As he has now appropriated the characteristics of Indra his feet are marked by "*dhvaja*", "*vajra*" etc. and he has to double his hands to wear the additional weapons bow, arrows etc. which, also, are inherited from Indra. Sometimes instead of lotus he is found to hold a noose—a characteristic he must have acquired from Varuṇa. He wears further a beautiful garland (*Vana-mālā*) and the invaluable jewel (*Kaustubha*) and, above all, possesses *Śrī*, his permanent consort. Further, as emblems of his sovereignty he has fans and the royal umbrella and is surrounded by eight

³⁹ *yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati. tasyā'haṁ na prapadyāmi sa ca me na prapadyati...* *Gītā* 6.30.

⁴⁰ *sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ paśyed bhagavad-bhāvam ātmanah. bhūtāni bhagavatyaṁ manyeja bhāgavatottamaḥ...* 11.2.45.

⁴¹ *tāntrikāḥ paricaryāyām kevalasya śrīyaḥ pāteḥ. aṅgopāṅgāyudhākalpaṁ kalpayanti yathā ca yaiḥ...* 12.11.2.

beautiful girls viz, *Puṣṭi* (nourishment), *Gir* (speech), *Kānti* (sweetness), *Kīrti* (fame), *Tuṣṭi* (satisfaction), *Ilā* (lustre), *Ūrjā* (power) and *Māyā*.⁴¹ He is also being praised by hermits and gods.

An analysis of this attractive anthropomorphism gives us a glimpse of the nature of cultural fusion. Kṛṣṇa has now entered into the inner being of Viṣṇu and so Viṣṇu's Aryan character has to fall upon the externals—garments, ornaments, weapons and so on. But nevertheless his Aryan character is too deep-rooted to be ousted and it returns in different forms. The two basic motifs of Viṣṇu—war-godhood and lovable nature—still permeate the transfiguration indicated above. The sun-god returns in the conchshell, the lotus and the wheel. Perhaps the club was the original weapon of Viṣṇu. The *Savitṛ* returns in the ornaments of molten gold. Viṣṇu was already powerful with an admixture of sovereignty of Varuṇa. But such sovereignty was re-asserted in terms of Dravidian grandeur. Viṣṇu was thus the ideal of religious emotion. That was to his credit and also to his disadvantage; for, his devotees would enjoy the benefit of possessing the same feature as that of himself. So he had to have, as a mark of distinction, the jewel *Kaustubha*, again the miniature sun-god, and *Śrī*. *Śrī* is earliest mentioned in the *Śrī-Sūkta*.⁴² In the *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa*⁴³ she is the goddess

⁴¹ *tasyotsaṅge ghana-śyāmaṁ pīta-kaufeya-vāsasam.*
puruṣaṁ catur-bhujam śāntam padma-patrā'ruṇekṣaṇam..
cāru-prasanna-vadanaṁ cāru-hāsa-nirikṣaṇam..
su-bhṛūnnasaṁ cāru-karṇam su-kapolāraṇādharam..
pralamba-pivara-bhujam tuṅgāmsoraḥ-sṭhala-śriyam.
kambu-karṇam nimna-nābhīm valimat-pallavodaram..
bṛhat-kaṭi-taṭa-śroṇi-karabhorudvayānvitam.
cāru-jānu-yugaṁ cāru-janḡhā-yugala-saṁyutam..
tuṅga-gulphā'ruṇa-nakha-vrāta-didhātibhir vṛtam.
navāṅgulyaṅguṣṭha-dalair vilasat-pāda-paṅkojam..
su-māhārha-maṇi-vrāta-kirīṭa-kaṭakā'ṅgadaiḥ.
kaṭi-sūtra-brahma-sūtra-hāra-nūpura-kunḡdalaḥ.
bhṛājamānaṁ padma-karaṁ śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-dharam.
śrī-vatsa-vakṣasaṁ bhrājat-kaustubhaṁ vana-mālinam..
sunanda-nanda-pramukhaiḥ pārṣadaiḥ sanakādībhiḥ.
sureśair brahma-rudrā'dyair navabhiḥ ca dvijottamaiḥ.
prahlāda-nārada-vasu-pramukhair bhāgavatottamaiḥ.
stūyamānaṁ prīhag bhāvair vacobhir amalā'tmabhiḥ..
śrīyā puṣṭyā girā kāntyā kīrtiyā tuṣṭyelayorjayā.
vidyayā'vidyayā śaktyā māyayā ca niṣevitam.. 10.39.46-55.

⁴² *Śrī-Sūkta*, Khila 11 after *Maṇḍala* 5.

⁴³ SB 11.4.3.18.

of prosperity and is the daughter of *Prajāpati* and in the *Bau-dhāyana-dharma-sūtra*⁴⁴ she is a goddess of worship. But her universal motherhood and beauty as found in the *Khila* coalesce with creativity and beauty of Viṣṇu; and so, *Śrī* enters the heart of Viṣṇu.

By the third epoch Viṣṇu acquires further names: "*Vāsu-deva*", "*Nārāyaṇa ṛṣi*", the lord of the universe (*viśveśvara*) yet the universe itself (*viśva*). In this fusion of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu some of the contributions from Kṛṣṇa are:—(a) name (b) dark colour (c) two hands that rule out other possibilities (d) birth from *Devakī*, (e) studentship of *Ghora Āṅgīrasa*; while from Viṣṇu are: (a) beauty, (b) blooming youth, (c) the priceless garland (*Vana-mālā*), (d) the jewel (*Kaustubha*), (e) status of all the four castes of *Puruṣa*, (f) *Śrī*, (h) girl attendants and (i) *tri-vikrama* which meant the three abodes and also his prowess. To all these contributions of Viṣṇu were added the mysterious cows with which Viṣṇu is associated in the *Rg-Veda*. Of this grand fusion emerged the sublime Reality in which both the historical Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu find their highest fulfilment.

THE FINAL PHASE

The communion of the historical Kṛṣṇa with the great wealth of ideas called Viṣṇu is indeed a colossal event. Kṛṣṇa's triumph suggested the free influx of non-Aryan thoughts and ideas, which created a grand confluence with the Aryan stream of thoughts and ideas. Viṣṇu of the *Rg-Veda*, who had already developed into an institution and had, in spite of all sorts of appellations, grown almost amorphous to cope with the heterogeneous materials heaped on him through centuries, was now transformed, by the black magic of the historical Kṛṣṇa, into a coherent anthropomorphic unity and this ideal was soon idolised into a unique idyllic personality. Such personality as the whole truth of the Indian population required a name. And, *Kṛṣṇa* was such a name appended to it. As the ideal of unity amidst strifes—personal, social and racial—this Kṛṣṇa was the universal ground of solace and so the *Bhāgavata* suggests that hard iron

⁴⁴ *Śrīyam devīṃ ca (tarṇayāmi)*. BDS 2.5.23.

age (*Kali*) began on the day Kṛṣṇa departed from this world.⁴⁵ The ideal Kṛṣṇa was then the central truth (*bhānu*) in the community of ideas called *Viṣṇu*.⁴⁶ Thus Viṣṇu who had been undergoing steady and most eventful development with his wonderful power of assimilation was now embraced and transcended by this new concept, the ideal Kṛṣṇa. So as a part of this totality, Viṣṇu began to be considered as an emanation (*Avatāra*) of Kṛṣṇa, just as the historical Kṛṣṇa was considered the same in relation to Viṣṇu when he merged his identity into the being of the latter.

In the field of religion the rise of the personal God who could touch upon the vital chords of man inevitably changed ceremonial holiness into "morality touched with emotion". Inner purity which symbolized man's desire to come to the deepest relationship with the Lord was now to be achieved through another kind of sacrifice abounding in chanting His names (which were now many) and invocations (*saṁkīrtana*). Such change of attitude on the part of the worshipper declared the final triumph of the *Tantras* over the sacramental Scriptures which had so far held the ground. This does not mean that the *Vedas* were expelled; but only, that the *Vedas* had to adjust themselves to the needs of man who now believed more in the direct appeal to the Supernatural than to take recourse to the meanderings of ceremonial complexity.

In this new climate, the war-god and lovable god—the two radical aspects of Viṣṇu—underwent revolutionary changes. The war-god was reduced to his minimum—traceable only in the supernatural exploits of child Kṛṣṇa and later on in the diplomacy and the charioteer's role in the *Kurukṣetra* war—while the lovable god rose to the maximum of expression in what is known as the *Bhāgavata* cult. In this transfiguration of Kṛṣṇa into an idyllic god of love, the evolution of *Śrī* concept had a lot to do. The *Vedic* concept of *Śrī*, referred to before, involved a conflict of ideas. The universal mother and the goddess of beauty with blooming youth meant two opposite attitudes which the same worshipper can ill afford to possess. This

⁴⁵ *yasmin kṛṣṇo divaṁ yātas tasminn eva tadā'hani.
pratīpannam kali-yugam iti prāhuḥ purā-vidaḥ.* 12.2.33.

⁴⁶ *viṣṇor bhagavato bhānuḥ kṛṣṇā'khyo'sau.* 12.2.29ab.

emotional conflict led to the disintegration of Śrī's personality, and, when Viṣṇu was being converted into a pastoral god of love, Śrī, marked by her eternal youth and beauty, was overhauled into a "gopī", a cowherd girl, together with the other girl attendants of Viṣṇu whose number, limited to eight originally, now considerably increased. Śrī in the *Bhāgavata*, is just a gopī though her original privileged position in relation to Viṣṇu is maintained in the *Bhāgavata*. It was with this gopī, in exclusion of others, that *Bhagavān* suddenly disappeared while they had all come to meet Him at the call of His lute. Similarly, the special distinction of the eight girl attendants is recognised in the concept of "aṣṭa-sakhīs" of later *Vaiṣṇavism*. The three steps of Viṣṇu find expression in the unfoldment of Kṛṣṇa's activities in the three regions—*Vṛndāvana*, *Mathurā* and *Dvārakā*. Of these *Vṛndāvana* is of unique importance in that the ancient association of Viṣṇu with the mysterious cows in *Vraja* is reasserted here in the modern context of extravagances of love. As Śrī and the girl attendants of Viṣṇu are but his powers so their later representatives viz, the gopīs cannot be other people's wives. The description of the *Bhāgavata* in that vein must not therefore be taken too literally. The *Bhāgavata* also warns us against that pitfall because it solemnly declares that the exuberance of erotic description usually associated with autumnal effusion is merely a plea for the indescribable ecstasy which is brought into full play when the Supreme indulges in His ownself, *Yoga-māyā*.⁴⁷ In other words, *Bhāgavata* Kṛṣṇa is found here as all-bliss with full manifestation of all his powers i.e., according to the definition mentioned at the beginning, Kṛṣṇa is here *Bhagavān* (*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svyam*).

In this ideal Kṛṣṇa, the *Puruṣa* of the *Sāṃkhya*, the *Paramātmā* of the *Yoga*, the *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads* have all met in the grand company of the *Vedic* solar deity with the *Sātvatas* contributing their own share. He is thus the "parama-Puruṣa", "Paramātmā" and "para-Brahman", "Vāsudeva

⁴⁷ *evam śaśāṅkāṁśu-virājitā nīlāḥ
sa satya-kāmo'nurata'balā-gaṇaḥ...
siṣeva ātmanyavaruddha-saurataḥ
sarvāḥ śarat-kāvyā-kathāḥ rasā'śrayāḥ... 10.33.25.*

Bhagavān". Alliance of Kṛṣṇa with *Yoga-māyā*⁴⁸ (which is expressly stated by the *Bhāgavata* to belong to the *Śakti* cult) and also with *Rāmacandra*,⁴⁹ the great hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, further shows the all-embracing character of the ideal Kṛṣṇa. Thus the highest of religion and the highest of philosophy have found a unity in the concept of the ideal Kṛṣṇa. Through the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*, through the *Sāṃkhya* and the *Yoga*, through the vast body of contributions modelled under the *Sātvatas* and, last but not the least, through the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, Indian mind has found most beautiful and universal expression in Kṛṣṇa, the ideal god of the Hindus.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *bhagavān api viśvā'tmā veditvā karmā-jam bhayam.*
yadūnām nija-nāthānām yoga-māyām samādiśat. . 10.2.6.

⁴⁹ *tyaktvā sudustya-ja-surepsita-rājya-lakṣmīm*
dharmiṣṭha ārya-vacasā yad agād araṇyam.
māyā-mṛgaṁ dayitayepsitam anuvadhāvad
vande mahā-puruṣa te caranā'ravindam. . 11.5.34.

⁵⁰ *trayyā copaniṣadbhiḥ ca sāmkhya-yogaiḥ ca sātvataiḥ.*
upagīyamāna-māhātmyam hariṁ sāmānyatā'tma-jam. . 10.8.45.

CHAPTER V

BHAGAVĀN ŚRĪ-KṚṢṆA*

BHAGAVĀN KṚṢṆA, THE PIVOT OF THE BHĀGAVATA PHILOSOPHY

Non-dual consciousness being indescribable, description starts with *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, which, as we have seen, is *Bhagavān Śrī-Kṛṣṇa*. So, the philosophy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is hinged on this Kṛṣṇa-concept. Indeed the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is so called because it is concerned with *Śrīmad-Bhagavān* i.e., Śrī-Kṛṣṇa. It is no wonder therefore that at the beginning of the *Bhāgavata*, the episode of Nārada and Vyāsa introduces the importance of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* above the other *Purāṇas* in the following way:—Vyāsa had no peace of mind though he had composed the *Mahābhārata*, the encyclopaedia of different departments of knowledge. He longed for peace of mind and met the wise Nārada therefor. Vyāsa described his own contributions even in the field of religion. But Nārada replied that Vyāsa had obviously touched upon various subjects including religion but he had not expatiated so far exclusively upon Vāsudeva (i.e., Śrī-Kṛṣṇa).¹ “That expression is indeed the panacea of all sins in which at every

* The fusion of the historical Kṛṣṇa with the ever-expanding stream of the *Vedic Viṣṇu* has led to an integration, as we have been in the previous chapter, into what we have called the metaphysical Kṛṣṇa, the third grade of Reality, or simply, *Bhagavān Śrī-Kṛṣṇa*. But there are always some irreducible elements of history which refuse to be fused by the thought process. Philosophy cannot assume them to begin with and can only follow persistently the plan of trying to think things out. The test is to maintain a consistency between metaphysical demands and historical realities. This means thinking of a different order in which things both in their individuality and their connections should receive their due in the metaphysical interpretation which is put upon them. The present chapter is an humble attempt to offer such a mode of thinking, a perspective to bear upon this complicated situation.

¹ *yathā dharmādayaś cārthā muni-varyā'nukirtitāḥ.
na tathā vāsudevasya mahimā hyanuvartitāḥ.* 1.5.9

step the glorious deeds of *Ananta* (i.e., Kṛṣṇa) are clothed".² "Austerity and scholarship, sacrifice and hymns, wisdom and gift—all lead, according to the wise, to that unfaltering goal viz, the appraisal of Lord Kṛṣṇa".³ So, the *Bhāgavata* concludes at its end: "In other works Hari, who annihilates all impurities in this dark age (*Kali*), has not been extolled continuously. But in the present work viz, the *Bhāgavata*, all-comprehensive *Bhagavān* has been sung at every step on the occasions of various episodes".⁴

The episode then describes that the instruction of Nārada inspired Vyāsa to compose the present work. The lesson of the episode boils down to this: The accredited author of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* composed it exclusively for the purpose of delineating the concept of *Bhagavān* Śrī-Kṛṣṇa. The author desired to actualise this original motive through the present work. It may be pointed out, by the way, that the episode of Nārada and Vyāsa reminds one of a similar story of Nārada and Sanat-kumāra, described in the seventh chapter of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*. One might therefore say that the traditional stock of stories was invoked by the *Bhāgavata* to show, once again, its allegiance to the *Upaniṣadic* heritage.

The *Bhāgavata* not only deals with the life of Kṛṣṇa but it also describes what he preached through his life, deeds and statements. This is brought home by another episode. In Naimiṣāranya—that holy forest where the hermits used to meet for spiritual discussions around the sacrificial fire—the hermits asked Sūta as to what happened to "*dharma*" (religion) that Kṛṣṇa represented, after he had departed from the

² *tad-vāg-visarga janatā'gha-viplavo*
yasmin prati-ślokaṁ a-baddhavyatyaṇi.
nāmānyanantasya yaśo'nikitāni yat
śṛṇvanti gāyanti gṛṇanti sādhaṇaḥ.. 1.5.11

³ *naiṣkarmyam apyacyuta-bhāva-varjitam*
na śobhate jñānam alaṁ nir-añjanam.
kutaḥ punaḥ śaivād a-bhadrām iṣvare
na cārṇpitam karma yad apyakāraṇam.. 1.5.12

⁴ *kali-mala-saṁhati-kālano'khileśo*
harir itaratra na gīyate hyabhikṣyam.
iha tu punar bhagavān a-śeṣa-mūrtiḥ
paripatḥito'nupadam kathā-prasaṅgaiḥ.. 12.12.66

material world at the end of the *Dvāpara* era.⁵ Sūta answered: "Kṛṣṇa having departed, the present *Purāṇa*, the *Bhāgavata*, arose for helping out the people of *Kali*, steeped in ignorance".⁶ It is apparent from this episode that the *Bhāgavata* incorporates the life of Kṛṣṇa as it clothes the "dharma" that Kṛṣṇa stood for. One might say that the *Bhāgavata* has drawn upon the Kṛṣṇa-concept in order to preach, through his life and beliefs, a unique religion which emerging from Kṛṣṇa *Bhagavān* acquires the designation, "*Bhāgavata-dharma*". One might even go to the extent of asserting that the *Bhāgavata* is so called not only because it deals with *Bhagavān* but also because it presents "*Bhāgavata-dharma*," a new religion most appropriate for the ignorant people of this dark iron age.

Since the *Bhāgavata* incorporates the life and teachings of Kṛṣṇa, the listening to the *Bhāgavata* with loving care contributes to the origination of devotion for Kṛṣṇa, the "*Uttama-Puruṣa*", by which affliction, delusion and fear are warded off.⁷ The *Bhāgavata* describes the process as follows: "If one listens with loving faith to the deeds of Kṛṣṇa and describes them constantly, *Bhagavān* enters one's mind in no time. Having penetrated the mind through the pores of ears, *Bhagavān* crystallises the impure mind into holy feelings (*bhāva*), just like the autumn purifying the profaned waters of the rains. Blessed with a purified mind the devotee holds firm to the feet of the Lord, just as a traveller reaches his home and thus feels happy after the troubles of his journey are over".⁸

The auditory knowledge of the *Bhāgavata* passages is here said to conduce to the entrance of *Bhagavān* into the mind of

⁵ brūhi yogesvare kṛṣṇe brahmaṇye dharma-varmaṇi.
svān kāṣṭhām adhunopete dharmaḥ kaṁ śaraṇaṁ gataḥ.. 1.1.23

⁶ kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagata dharma-jñānā'dibhiḥ saha.
kalau naṣṭa-dṛṣṭam eṣa purāṇa'rko'dhunoditaḥ.. 1.3.45

⁷ lokasya'jānato vidvāṁś cakre sātva-ta-saṁhitām..
yasyān vai śrūyamāṇāyān kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe.
bhaktir utpadyate pumsaḥ loka-moha-bhayā'pahā.. 1.7.6cd, 7

⁸ śṛṇvataḥ śraddhayā nityaṁ gṛṇataś ca sva-ceṣṭitam.
nātidīrghena kālena bhagavān viśate hṛdi..
praviṣṭaḥ karṇa-randhrena svānām bhāva-saro-ruham.
dhunoti samalāṁ kṛṣṇaḥ salilasya yathā śarat..
dhautātmā puruṣaḥ kṛṣṇa-pāda-mūlān na muñcati.
mukta-sarva-parikleśaḥ pānthaḥ sva-śaraṇaṁ yathā.. 2.8.4-6

vide also 1.2.17-18

the votary. Entrance is direct realization of *Bhagavān*. It may be asked as to how verbal testimony can lead to intuitive knowledge, for the former is generally confined to the production of verbal knowledge (*śabda-bodha*) which is indirect in nature. Indeed the same question has been raised against the *Vivaraṇa* School of *Ācārya* Śaṅkara, which recognises the direct realisation of *Brahman* even from verbal testimony. For it, great statements like "That art thou" directly lead to the perceptual knowledge of *Brahman*, as the statement like "You are the tenth man" directly awakens a confused person to the perceptual identification of his own self. The above process adopted by the *Bhāgavata* as regards the origination of devotion for Kṛṣṇa confirms the standpoint held out by the *Vivaraṇa* School.

The *Bhāgavata* cites the case of Nārada to affirm the process: "Thus day in and day out—through the seasons of the year—I listened attentively to the crystal fame of Hari when it was sung by the great hermits. This persistent hearing eventually gave rise to devotion leading to the destruction of all impurities".⁹ The *Bhāgavata* admits Nārada to be the propounder of the *Sātvata* doctrine of which the *Bhāgavata* professes to be a collection.¹⁰ So, the evidence from the personal experience of Nārada as to the listening of the *Bhāgavata* leading to the direct vision of the Lord, carries an additional weight. Though listening to the *Bhāgavata* is stated here to rouse devotion yet the *Bhāgavata*-concept of devotion, it may be indicated, is not blind emotionalism but it includes knowledge.

It may be mentioned here that the devotees put a different construction upon the passages describing the above process leading to the revelation of the Lord. It will be discussed later that a "Descent" (*Avatāra*) accepts two bodies—one physical and the other spiritual—when he comes down to live with us. After his mission has been realised he quits his physical form at the time of his departure while the spiritual form continues to exist. But where can *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa go after the cessation of his

⁹ *ittham śarat-prāvṛṣikāvṛtū harer
viśṇvato me'nusavaṁ yaśo'malam.
saṁkīrtiyamānaṁ munibhir mahā'tmabhir
bhaktiḥ pravṛtta'tma-rajasa-tamo'pahā...* 1.5.28

¹⁰ *ṛṣīyam ṛṣi-sargaṁ vai devaṛṣituṁ upetya sah.
tantraṁ sātvataṁ ācaṣṭa naiḥkarmyaṁ karmaṇāṁ yataḥ...* 1.3.8

sports at the end of the *Dvāpara* era? He being the divine light his total absence will blind the universe. So the devotees conceive that his departure can at best mean changing the physical form i.e., accepting a new form instead of the old. This new form is the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. Herein lives *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa. When a devotee listens faithfully to the passages of the *Bhāgavata*, *Bhagavān* enters the heart of the devotee in the shape of those passages and brushes aside all impurities accumulated in his mind from time immemorial. Thus *Bhagavān* out of pity for his devotee undertakes the scavenger's job to save his soul.

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa being the pivot of the *Bhāgavata* philosophy all the questions put to Sūta by the hermits, which may be considered as the prologue to the *Bhāgavata*, are concerned with Kṛṣṇa, excepting the first and the last questions that relate to the unique religion (*parama-dharma*).¹¹ As the rest of the *Bhāgavata* are the answers to these questions all the *skandhas* of the *Bhāgavata* refer to Kṛṣṇa wherever it has been possible to do so. For example, the second *skandha* refers to Kṛṣṇa in the episode of Brahmā and Nārada. The third *skandha* centres round Kṛṣṇa in the dialogue between Vidura and Uddhava, and so on. In fact all the *skandhas* are woven in the texture of the Kṛṣṇa-concept.

Although every *skandha* bears the indelible stamp of Kṛṣṇa, the tenth *skandha* is exclusively concerned with his life and activities. Indeed this *skandha* occupies a unique position in the field of devotion, as a full-fledged biography of Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavata* also has laid emphasis on this *skandha*. It enumerates the ten characters of a "Purāṇa" of which the first nine are held to be useful in so far as they throw light on the tenth and the last characteristic. The *Bhāgavata* then proceeds to define the tenth as follows: "Āśraya" is the source and the last resort of the universe. It is called the supreme *Brahman*,

¹¹ *tatra tatrāñjasāyusman bhavatā yad viniścitam.*
puṁsām ekāntataḥ freyaḥ tan naḥ saṁsitum arhaḥ..
prāyeṇā'lpāyusaḥ sabhya kalāvasmin yuge janāḥ..
mandāḥ sumanda-matayo manda-bhāgyā hyupadrutāḥ..
bhūriṇi bhūri-karmāṇi śrotavyāni vibhāgataḥ.
ataḥ sādho'tra yat saram samuddhṛtya manīṣyā..
brūhi bhadraya bhūtānām yenātmā suprasīdati.. 1.19-11

Paramātman".¹² While the other *skandhas* frequently refer to Kṛṣṇa, the tenth *skandha* embodies his complete personality. This is borne out by Śrīdhara. At the introduction of the tenth *skandha* Śrīdhara salutes Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Reality. He then asserts: "In this tenth *skandha* the highest is being considered. He is the final resort of the helpless devotees. Born in the family of the Yadus the infinite bliss displays here the magic of Divine Sport".¹³

A METAPHYSICAL APPROACH TO THE BIOGRAPHY OF BHAGAVĀN KṚṢṆA

The biography of *Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa* stated in the *Purāṇas* in general and the *Bhāgavata* in particular may be summarised as follows: *Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa* was born at Mathurā. His parents were Vasudeva and Devakī. He took to birth in a prison cell on a moonless night. He was then taken to Vṛndāvana where he played many a sport with the cowherd girls, the climax of which was "*rāsa-līlā*". He then went to Mathurā and killing the tyrant king Kāṁsa, his own uncle, he installed himself on the throne. While Vṛndāvana experienced his sweetness and beauty, Mathurā witnessed his majesty. Finally, he was at Dvārakā where he raised a huge family. Ultimately, before departing from this world he himself destroyed his entire lineage.

It has been stated before that *Bhagavān*, the all-bliss, the third grade of Reality, is no other than Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata*.

¹² *atra sarga visargaś ca sthānam poṣaṇam ūtayaḥ.
manvantareśā'nukathā nirodho muktir āśrayaḥ..
daśamasya viśuddhyartham navānām iha lakṣaṇam..
varṇayanti mahātmānaḥ śruteṇārthena cā'jñāsā..
bhūtamātrendriya-dhiyām janma sarga udāhṛtaḥ..
brahmaṇo guṇa-vaiśamyād visarga pauraṣaḥ smṛtaḥ..
sthitir vaikunṭha-vijayaḥ poṣaṇam tad-anugrahaḥ..
manvantarāṇi sad-dharma ūtayaḥ karma-vāsanāḥ..
avatārā'nucaritaḥ hareḥ cā'syā'nuvartinām..
pumsām iśa-kathāḥ proktā nānā'khyānopabāsmhitāḥ..
nirodho'syā'nuśayanam ātmanaḥ saha śaktibhiḥ..
muktir hitvā'nyathā-rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ..
ābhāsaś ca nirodhaś ca yato'styadhyavasiyate..
sa āśrayaḥ param brahma paramātmēti śabdyate.. 2.10.1-7*

¹³ Śrīdhara introduces the 10th *skandha* as follows:—
*viśva-sarga-visargā'di-nava-lakṣaṇa-lakṣitaḥ..
śrī-kṛṣṇā'khyām param dhāma jagad-dhāma namāma tat..
daśame daśamam lakṣyam āśritā'śraya-vigraham..
kṛiḍad yadu-kulāmbhodhau parā'nandam udīryate.. etc.*

Now, all-bliss has to reveal itself in a limited form in order to be comprehensible to the ordinary people. The luminous spiritual matter (*viśuddha-sattva*) is called "*vasudeva*" and *Bhagavān* expressing himself through it, is therefore called *Vāsudeva*. So Kṛṣṇa has been conceived as the son of *Vasudeva*. As the abode of *Vasudeva* is *Mathurā* (*Vaikunṭha*) Kṛṣṇa was born at *Mathurā*. Again, in the form of *Vāsudeva* (or *Paramātmān*) he was revealed as four-handed, that being the typical form of *Paramātmān*. The moonless night and the prison cell indicate the bloom of ignorance and the bondage of man. In that prison cell Kṛṣṇa reveals himself as four-handed Viṣṇu in the desolate isolation before the awe-stricken eyes of *Devakī*—his mother and his devotee.

Thence at *Vṛndāvana* his life was nothing but a continuous series of sports. Here Kṛṣṇa was nothing but all pleasure. And in fitness of things it should be so, for *Vṛndāvana* is the representation of *Goloka*. The word "*go*" literally means 'the lustre'. Because of this innate lustre *Bhagavān* is called self-luminous (*sva-prakāśa*). But "*go*" also means the cow. It is in this latter sense that the *Bhāgavata* conceives Kṛṣṇa dwelling in a cowherd hamlet. As the conception of *Bhagavān* is all-bliss endowed with all potencies, this is taken by the *Bhāgavata* to represent Kṛṣṇa dallying with the *gopīs*, the cowherd girls. At every step we visualise the miracles of Kṛṣṇa because *Vṛndāvana* or *Goloka* is the abode where his potencies are in full play. But all plays were woven in the texture of joy and merry-making because through the Divine Sport the Lord was realising his own ecstasy, which reaches its climax in "*rāsa-līlā*".

From *Vṛndāvana* Kṛṣṇa proceeds to *Mathurā*. The *gopīs* wail the absence of Kṛṣṇa but they did not go to *Mathurā* to meet or join him. In the further exposition of Divine Sport *Bhagavān*, becomes *Paramātmān* or *Vāsudeva* but *Lakṣmī* serves him there and not *Yoga-māyā*. The *gopīs* being the different shades of *Yoga-māyā* are therefore absent in *Mathurā*. On the contrary, his queens like *Rukmiṇī* who is conceived to be the incarnation of *Lakṣmī*, serve Kṛṣṇa at *Mathurā*. Now, if we conceive *Bhagavān* to be the Reality endowed with all potencies and conceive *Paramātmān* to possess *Lakṣmī* then the personality at *Mathurā* is Śrī-Kṛṣṇa himself in so far as there is

consubstantiality between Vāsudeva, the second grade, and *Bhagavān*, the third grade; but reality living in Mathurā and reality living in Vṛndāvana may be deemed two different persons in view of the absence of the display of all potencies at Mathurā. Instead, Reality in Mathurā reveals majesty as symbolised in the concept of Kṛṣṇa being the king. This explains a theory current among the *Vaiṣṇavas* that Kṛṣṇa had promised to the *gopīs* that he would never leave Vṛndāvana and that he has perpetually stuck to that promise. Mathurā being the abode of majesty the wives of Kṛṣṇa respected him as a faithful and devoted wife would behave towards her husband but the sweetness and charm that characterised the association of the *gopīs* with Kṛṣṇa are conspicuously absent in Mathurā.

Kṛṣṇa lived the last part of his life as a householder in Dvārakā. He raised a very large family therein. *Paramātmān's* further unfoldment as *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality, explains this phenomenon. *Brahman* as the source of creation is charged with the potency viz, *Ātma-māyā* which is the principle of multiplicity. The concept of multiplicity is represented in having a large family, all eventually tracing their origin to Kṛṣṇa, as *Brahman* is the ultimate source of the physical universe. In the form of *Brahman* he created his huge family and ultimately he destroyed them all, as *Brahman* destroys the entire creation. And as *Brahman* exists even after dissolution, so Kṛṣṇa existed and enjoyed his divine isolation even after his entire family was annihilated.

Subsequently Kṛṣṇa suffered death by injury at the hand of a hunter. His death, of course, was not like that of an ordinary mortal. It might be called death in so far as his physical form was dismembered from his being but it was in fact disappearance with his spiritual form. He died of injury because *Bhagavān* and injury are incompatible. The sublime religion that Kṛṣṇa preaches may therefore be taken to be marked by non-injury.

The unfoldment of Divine Sport terminates, from the spiritual point of view, at the stage of *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality. Then there is a regressive movement towards the original state of the third grade of Reality. From the esoteric point of view one might describe this phenomenon as the re-

union of the *gopīs* with Kṛṣṇa at *Goloka*; for, *Goloka* is the region where *Bhagavān* is endowed with his potencies. Starting from the departure of Kṛṣṇa from *Vṛndāvana* till reunion, this long period may be treated as a period of intolerable separation, the acute sense of which is necessary before Kṛṣṇa can be embraced in the heart of hearts.

The deduction of Kṛṣṇa's biography from the *Bhāgavata* metaphysics in the lines suggested above is also corroborated in the concept of Kṛṣṇa as black. The word "*kṛṣṇa*" literally means black; and, *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, cannot be other than black. *Bhagavān* being the *suṣupti-pāda*, the melting crucible of all diversity, may be conceived as black which swallows up all objects around like the moonless night. Secondly, the starting point of creation has been taken as black in the *Upaniṣads*. Before creation there is said to be no effect or cause. Mere darkness (*tamas*) reigned supreme. *Bhagavān* as the starting point of creation may have similarly been conceived as dark. Thirdly, this imagery has actually been adopted by the *Dhyāna-bindu-Upaniṣad*. It describes the colour of the three syllables constituting "*aum*" in the following strain: "*A-kāra* is yellow because that is the colour of activity. *U-kāra* is calm and therefore white. *M-kāra* is "*Kṛṣṇa-tāmasa*" i.e., dark as the gloom."¹⁴ Here the *Upaniṣad* directly uses the term "*Kṛṣṇa*" with reference to "*m*" syllable which the *Māṇḍūkya* takes to stand for the third grade of Reality, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata*.

We may therefore conclude that originally *Bhagavān* was called, for example in the *Dhyāna-bindu-Upaniṣad*, '*Kṛṣṇa*' because he was conceived to be black on the grounds suggested above. With the development of *Vaiṣṇavism*, "*Kṛṣṇa*" stood for a definite personality distinguished from the other types of anthropomorphosis of Reality. So what was intended as an adjective became a proper noun.

The original sense of "*Kṛṣṇa*" can be traced in several *Upaniṣads*. For example, the *Brahma-Upaniṣad* describes the four regions as follows:—"Now, *Puruṣa* has four regions, the

¹⁴ *a-kāraḥ pīta-varṇaḥ syād rajo-guṇa udiritaḥ.*

u-kāraḥ śāttvikaḥ śuklo ma-kāraḥ kṛṣṇa-tāmasaḥ. Dhyāna-bindu-Upaniṣad

naval region, the heart, the throat and the head. There lives *Brahman* consisting of four grades. In the waking state stays *Brahmā*, in sleep *Viṣṇu*, in dreamless sleep *Rudra* and in the fourth state the immutable".¹⁵ If one synchronises the concept of *Brahman*, described here, with that described in the *Māṇḍūkya*, the concept of *Rudra* would appear to correspond to the third grade of Reality (i.e., *Bhagavān*). This concurrence between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rudra* can easily be explained in the light of the original sense of the term "*kṛṣṇa*" i.e., black. The *Skanda-Upaniṣad* makes this identity further explicit when it says: "I bow to *Śiva* who is *Viṣṇu* and to *Viṣṇu* who is *Śiva*. *Viṣṇu* is the essence of *Śiva*. So is *Śiva* of *Viṣṇu*."¹⁶ If we remember the basic meanings of both "*Śiva*" and "*Viṣṇu*" as referring to the same Reality much of the squabble would naturally disappear.

Like the name "*Kṛṣṇa*" the possession of two hands is also explicable with regard to *Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān*. *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, is the final goal of the spiritual aspirants. Standing for the perfection of the ideals of man, *Kṛṣṇa* may legitimately be taken as two-handed.

Lastly as the sports of *Kṛṣṇa* are exuberant in *Vṛndāvana* and as "*rāsa-līlā*" is the culmination of all sports, we may make some comments on the lute of *Kṛṣṇa*, *gopīs*, *Vṛndāvana* and the "*rāsa-līlā*".

The lute of *Kṛṣṇa* has attained notoriety due to its power to unfetter the shackles of empirical existence. At its call the *gopīs* meet *Kṛṣṇa* casting aside all their near and dear ones. The doctrine of Divine Sport involves an ambivalence in the creative activity of the Absolute. Diversity is as necessary to Divine Sport as unity. While the individual souls fulfil the direction of diversity the innate unity between them and *Brahman* is symbolised in the concept of the lute of *Kṛṣṇa*. This ingrained unity is also recognised by the *Bhāgavata* in the con-

¹⁵ *athā'sya puruṣasya catvāri sthānāni bhavanti. nābhīr hṛdayaṁ kaṇṭhaṁ mūrdhā ca. tatra ca catuṣ-pādaṁ brahma vibhāti. jāgarīte brahmā, svapne viṣṇuḥ suṣuptau rudras turīyam akṣaram.*

Brahma-Upaniṣad

¹⁶ *śivāya viṣṇu-rūpāya śiva-rūpāya viṣṇave.*

śivasya hṛdayaṁ viṣṇur viṣṇoḥ ca hṛdayaṁ śivah.. Skanda-Upaniṣad

cept of *Vidyā* conceived to have been co-existent with *Avidyā*, the principle of bondage. The lute is eternally in action. It has been calling the individual souls which from time immemorial had lost their inner soul, the *Brahman*, to re-unite with it, to be gratified with the embrace of the Absolute. But its call has been falling flat on our material ears. One has only to listen to it and the lute does the rest of the job.

And the *gopīs* are the individual souls eternally lusting for happiness. As Kṛṣṇa stands for bliss, pure and simple, the *gopīs* are eternally in search of Kṛṣṇa. The alluring nature of bliss is attributed to Kṛṣṇa's lute. The *gopīs* were busy with their household duties and they were happy with their sons and husbands until they listened to the alluring music of the lute. Souls have been undergoing the beginningless cycles of birth and death until are awakened to spirituality. Then they develop a divine discontent which finds its highest fulfilment in their total identification with the Absolute, as the *gopīs* had achieved the deepest embrace of Kṛṣṇa.

Vṛndāvana is blessed with the perpetual presence of Kṛṣṇa. So one can define Vṛndāvana as the region where Kṛṣṇa lives for ever. Now, the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* proclaims that the Lord has penetrated everything. Hence all existence whether cosmic or super-cosmic is endowed with the presence of the Supreme. So everything may be viewed from this standpoint to be a part of Vṛndāvana and all souls living in it to be *gopīs*. Only one has to realise it in actual experience.

Though we are all inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, unfortunately for us we are sleeping over this truth. The *Vaiṣṇavas* attribute this sleep to *Bhagavān* and say that the sports of Kṛṣṇa begin with "*kuñja-bhaṅga*" i.e., from the moment Kṛṣṇa, so long sleeping in the embrace of his beloved (i.e. *Śrī-Rādhā*), is awakened by the *gopīs*. In metaphysical terms this means that we are to awaken the highest in us by wisdom so that the sports of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, the third grade of Reality, may be revealed to us. This revelation followed by our participation in the sports is achieved when the barriers of pragmatic existence are broken. Then the individual soul is locked in the embrace of the Absolute. This achievement is the highest triumph of "*rāsa-līlā*".

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNAL KṚṢṆA AND
THE HISTORICAL KṚṢṆA

Now if the Kṛṣṇa-concept of the *Bhāgavata* is a metaphysical deduction how can this be reconciled with the historical Kṛṣṇa who is believed to have flourished some three thousand years ago at the family of the *Yadus*? How can a historical personality be taken to have been culled from metaphysical data? How can Kṛṣṇa which thus belongs to the world of thought be clothed in flesh and blood? How to bridge this gap between metaphysics and history?

The *Bhāgavata* seems to have propounded the doctrine of the eternal Kṛṣṇa whose activities are reflected in the life of the historical Kṛṣṇa. It seems to believe in the eternality of Kṛṣṇa's activity, his abodes and his form. Eternality of Kṛṣṇa's activities explains how Nārada whose vision penetrates everything could predict the activities that Kṛṣṇa was to perform while he would be at Mathurā.¹⁷ As to the eternality of Vṛndāvana the *Bhāgavata* puts the following in the mouth of Nārada addressing Maitreya:—"So, my son, do proceed to the holy bank of Yamunā and to the holy forest of Vṛndāvana which is blessed with the eternal presence of Hari".¹⁸ This suggests the eternality of Vṛndāvana. Similarly a passage like "Eternally flourishes the great Kṛṣṇa with his *Yadu* family, destroying immorality with his own prowess"¹⁹ indicates the permanence of Dvārakā where Kṛṣṇa lived as a householder. Vṛndāvana and Dvārakā referred to in these passages cannot be identified with the historical places which are liable to destruction in time to come. They are therefore to be conceived to possess spiritual existence which is never perished. As regards

¹⁷ cānūraṁ muṣṭikam caiva mallān anyāṁś ca hastinām.
kaṁśāṁ ca nihataṁ drakṣye paraśvo'hani te vibho..
tasyā'nu śaṅkha-yavana-murāṇāṁ narakasya ca.
pārijātā'paharaṇam indrasya ca parājayam..
yāni cā'nyāni vīryāni dvārakāṁ ā-vasan bhavān.
kartā drakṣyāmyaham tāni geyāni kavibhir bhuvi.. 10.37. 15, 16, 20

¹⁸ tat tāta gaṇḍha bhadrām te yamunāyās taṭam śuci.
puṇyāṁ madhu-vanaṁ yatra sānnidhyaṁ nityadā hareḥ.. 4.8.42

¹⁹ jayati jana-nivāso devakī-janma-vādo
yadu-vara-parīṣat svair dorbhir asyann adharmam.
sthīra-cara-vṛjīnaghnaḥ su-smīta-śrī-mukhena
vraja-pura-vanītānāṁ vardhayan kāma-devam.. 10.90.48

Kṛṣṇa's form the great devotee Akrūra exclaims on his way to Vṛndāvana to fetch Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā: "I shall have the pleasure to behold the feet of Hari that are constantly worshipped by various gods of high stature, by the hermits and devotees and by *Lakṣmī*".²⁰ If the same feet are being seen by all who hail from different times and places, the form of God cannot but be eternal.

It is in fitness with this belief in the eternality of Kṛṣṇa's abodes, that the mysteries of Goloka were revealed to the cowherd men as a flash on one occasion²¹ and to Akrūra on another.²² Thus the biography of the historical Kṛṣṇa has its prototype in eternal existence. From this standpoint historicity of Kṛṣṇa is just a projection of his spiritual life from the eternal abode, *Goloka*.

That the historical Kṛṣṇa was a manifestation of the eternal Kṛṣṇa is exemplified by two episodes depicted in the tenth *skandha* of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. The cowherd women of Vṛndāvana complained against Śrī-Kṛṣṇa for playing all sorts of tricks in stealing butter from their households. The angry mother Yaśodā brought a rope to bind Kṛṣṇa. The more rope she brought in for the purpose, the shorter it was to bind Kṛṣṇa. Yaśodā thus experienced her inability to confine the Infinite to finite roping.²³ On another occasion Yaśodā asked Kṛṣṇa to open his mouth so that she could inspect whether Kṛṣṇa had any stolen lump of butter in his mouth. In the gaping mouth of Kṛṣṇa Yaśodā visualized the entire universe lying as an atom in the infinite expanse of heaven.²⁴ Episodes like these indicate that though Kṛṣṇa had become middle-sized like an ordinary mortal he was in essence none other than the third grade of

²⁰ *yad arcitaṁ brahma-bhavā'dibhiḥ suraiḥ*
śriyā ca devyā munibhiḥ sa-sātvataiḥ.
go-cāraṇyā'nucaraiḥ carad vane
yad gopikānāṁ kuca-kunkumā'ṅkitam.. 10.38.8

²¹ *iti saṁcītya bhagavān mahā-kāruṇiko hariḥ.*
darśayāmāsa lokam svaṁ gopānāṁ tamasāḥ param.. 10.28.14

²² *nimajjya tasmin salile jaṇaṁ brahma sanātanam.*
tāveva dadṛśe'krūro rāma-kṛṣṇau samanvitau.. 10.39.41

²³ *yad āsit tad api nyūnaṁ tenā'nyad api sandadhe.*
tad api dvyāṅgulaṁ nyūnaṁ yad yad ādatta bandhanam.. 10.9.16

²⁴ *yadyevaṁ tarhi vyādehīyuktaḥ sa bhagavān hariḥ.*
vyādattā'vyāhataiḥvaryaḥ kṛiḍā-manuja-bālakaḥ..
sa tatra dadṛśe viśvaṁ jagat sthāṣṇu ca khaṁ dīśaḥ.
sā'dri-dvīpā'bdhi-bhū-golaṁ sa-vāyuvagnindutārakam.. 10.8.36-37

Reality. If there was a logical contradiction in the all-pervasive being middle-sized it displayed all the more the majesty of *Bhagavān*. For, according to the *Bhāgavata*, the nature of *Bhagavān* is inscrutable and it baffles all attempts of definition in precise terms.²⁵

As to the exact relation between the eternal Kṛṣṇa and the historical Kṛṣṇa the *Bhāgavata* takes it to be of perfect identity. The historical Kṛṣṇa is absolutely identical with the eternal Kṛṣṇa. This is stated on more than one occasion. The *gopīs*, for instance, had practised the vow of Kātyāyanī (*Kātyāyanī-vrata*) at the conclusion of which each of them prayed: "O Kātyāyanī, O great goddess of astounding powers, O ruling princess, I salute to you. Pray, let the son of Nanda (i.e., Kṛṣṇa) be *my* husband".²⁶ In consonance with this prayer by each of them to have Kṛṣṇa as *her* husband and not *theirs*, Kṛṣṇa had to manifest himself as many as there were *gopīs* on the occasion of "*rāsa-līlā*". The *Bhāgavata* says: "Kṛṣṇa rendered himself into as many selves (*ātman*) as there were *gopīs*. Thus he enjoyed their company though *per se* he was settled in self-ecstasy".²⁷ The "selves" were not shadows but as original as their prototype. This is indicated by the statement that *he* played and not *they*.

The same story is repeated elsewhere. Nārada wondered as to how Kṛṣṇa could cope with a fabulous number of wives at Dvārakā.²⁸ He once peeped into the places assigned separately to Kṛṣṇa's wives and could not believe his own eyes. He found Kṛṣṇa discharging different functions in each of them. Nārada found him "sacrificing the gods in some room, making wells, guest-houses and monasteries at another place, hunting at another, somewhere riding a noble horse, killing animals else-

²⁵ *etāḥ kuru-śreṣṭha jagad-vidhātur
nārāyaṇasyā'khila-sattva-dhāmnaḥ.
līlā-kathās te kathitāḥ samāsataḥ
kārttvyena nā'jo'pyabhidhātum iṣaḥ..* 12.4.39

²⁶ *kātyāyanī mahā-māye mahā-yoginyadhīsvari.
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devi patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ..* 10.22.4

²⁷ *kṛtvā tāvantam ātmānaṁ yāvatir gopa-yoṣitaḥ.
reme sa bhagavāns tābhīr ātmā'rāmo'pi līlayā..* 10.33.19

²⁸ *citrataṁ vataitad ekena vaṣuṣā yugaḥpat pṛthak.
grheṣu dvyasṭa-sāhasraṁ striyā eka udāvahat..* 10.69.2

where in the association of his relatives".²⁹ The *Bhāgavata* concludes: He found the same Kṛṣṇa existing simultaneously in all the residences".³⁰

The episodes of the historical Kṛṣṇa indicate that the same reality can not only be simultaneously many and those manifestations as original as their prototype but also those manifestations may discharge simultaneously different functions. This doctrine may suitably be applied to explain the relation between the historical Kṛṣṇa and the eternal Kṛṣṇa. One might say that the historical Kṛṣṇa is a perfect manifestation of the eternal Kṛṣṇa just as so many Kṛṣṇas at Vṛndāvana and Dvārakā in the episodes referred to above were absolutely the same as the original historical Kṛṣṇa. The historical Kṛṣṇa may also vary from the eternal Kṛṣṇa in some details just as one Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā varied greatly from another Kṛṣṇa in so far as each discharged different functions. This explains how the historical Kṛṣṇa differed in some details from the eternal Kṛṣṇa. For example, while the eternal Kṛṣṇa transcends space-time limitations the historical Kṛṣṇa was middle-sized. Or, the *gopīs* of the eternal Kṛṣṇa being his potencies are his own but they were represented as others' wives in the biography of the historical Kṛṣṇa. And so on.

Such a conception of Reality being many may be traced in the *Upaniṣads*. For example, the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* observes: "He takes one form, two, five, nine, eleven forms. Ten forms become hundred or one becomes thousands or twenty".³¹ The description by reversing the order of the numbers suggests absolute freedom of Reality to assume as many forms as it wishes to. This absolute freedom to be many is incorporated in the doctrine of Divine Sport. The *Bhāgavata* has used two analogies to illustrate this Divine Sport. Kṛṣṇa played with the cowherd girls just as "*Bhagavān* indulges in sport with

²⁹ *yajantaṁ sakālān devān kvā'pi kratubhir ūrjitaiḥ.
pūrttayantaṁ kvacid dharmāṁ kūpā'rāma-majhā'dibhiḥ..
carantaṁ mṛgayāṁ kvā'pi hayam āruhya saindhavam.
ghnantaṁ tatra paśūn medhyān paritāṁ yadu-puṅgavaiḥ..*
10.69.34-35

³⁰ *tam eva sarvageheṣu santam ekaṁ dadarśa ha..* 10.69.41cd

³¹ *sa ekadhā bhavati, tridhā bhavati, pañcadhā saptadhā navadhā caiva
punaś caikādaśa smṛtaḥ, śataṁ ca daśa caikāśa ca sahasrāṇi ca viṁśatiḥ*
ChU 7.26.2.

his potencies",³² or just as "a child plays with his own shadows".³³ Though the *Bhāgavata* describes these as potencies and shadows yet from the metaphysical point of view they may also be taken as perfect manifestations of the Absolute as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* holds when it exclaims: "The Absolute is perfect and so is the visible world. Because, what emanates from the perfect is also perfect. And when the perfect emerges from the perfect the Absolute still remains perfect."³⁴ From this standpoint everything is perfect. But, for the purpose of extolling the majesty of *Bhagavān* against the rest of the world, the historical Kṛṣṇa is being held as the perfect manifestation of the eternal Kṛṣṇa. Rūpa Gosvāmin in his *Laghu-bhāgavatā'mṛta*³⁵ calls the different selves of the historical Kṛṣṇa, revealed, for example, in Vṛndāvana at "rāsa-līlā," to be "*prakāśa*" i.e., perfect manifestations. The same term may be used to express the relation of the historical Kṛṣṇa with the eternal Kṛṣṇa. Thus the historical Kṛṣṇa may be designated as the "*prakāśa*" of the eternal Kṛṣṇa. The historical Kṛṣṇa or the "*prakāśa*" Kṛṣṇa stays for some time on this earth till his mission is fulfilled. Then the "*prakāśa*" Kṛṣṇa merges into the eternal Kṛṣṇa.³⁶

IS KṚṢṆA 'AMŚA' OR 'PŪRNA'?

It is now proposed to resort to the textual criticism for the purpose of confirming the conclusions mentioned before that Śrī-Kṛṣṇa is the fountain-head of all emergents and the historical Kṛṣṇa is the perfect manifestation of the eternal Kṛṣṇa.

At the preamble of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* the assembly of hermits at Naimiṣāranya asked five questions of which the first

³² *tābhir vidhūta-lokābhir bhagavān acyuto vṛtaḥ. vya-rocā'dhikam tāta puruṣaḥ śaktibhir yathā..* 10.32.10.

³³ *reme rameṣo vraja-sundaribhir yathā'rbhakaḥ sva-pratibimba-vibhramaḥ..* 10.33.16 cd.

³⁴ *om pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate. pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evā'vāṣyate..* 5.1.1.

³⁵ *anekasya prakāṣatā rūpasyaikasya yaikadā. sarvathā tat-svarūpaiva sa prakāśa itīryate..*

Laghu-bhāgavatā'mṛta by Rūpa Gosvāmin, p. 26.

³⁶ *bhagavān pitāmahaṁ vikṛya vibhūtir ātmano vibhuh. saṁyojya'itmani cā'tmānaṁ padma-netre nyamīlayat.. lokā'bhirāmān sva-tanuṁ dhāraṇā-dhyāna-manīgalam. yoga-dhāraṇayā'gneyyā dagdhvā dhāmā'viśat svayam..* 11.31.5-6.

four questions are as follows:—(1) Sūta, could you tell us why *Bhagavān* was born to Vasudeva and Devakī? (2) Please narrate to us his activities so loudly sung by the wise (3) Then, tell us about the stories of the “Descents” (*Avatāra*) of Hari (4) We would very much like to hear the deeds of Keśava (i.e., Hari), which he had performed along with Bala-rāma. The second and the third questions refer to the activities of Hari which he had undertaken from time to time, as different Descents. The fourth question is concerning Kṛṣṇa while the first enquires about the purpose for which Kṛṣṇa took a physical form.³⁷ Whether Hari is taken to be a manifestation of *Bhagavān* as shown above or whether he is taken to be the same as Śrī-Kṛṣṇa, in either case all the questions relate to Kṛṣṇa and therefore the stories of adopting different forms from time to time are all about Kṛṣṇa. In other words, the eternal Kṛṣṇa has been taken by the hermits to be the perpetual source of all Descents. Further, while the stories of other Descents are proposed in the second and third questions, the biography of the Kṛṣṇa Descent is asked by the hermits separately. This indicates that the Kṛṣṇa Descent or the historical Kṛṣṇa is distinct in nature from other Descents. The distinctness, as we shall presently see, lies in the historical Kṛṣṇa being the perfect manifestation of *Bhagavān*, the eternal Kṛṣṇa.

That the eternal Kṛṣṇa is the source of different types of Descents is illustrated by the *Bhāgavata* in different contexts. Thus Kṛṣṇa is said to have “descended as Fish, Horse, Tortoise, Lion-Man, Boar and the Swan”.³⁸ Kṛṣṇa is here stated to be the source of Descents like Fish and Tortoise which will be shown to be a special type of Descents called “the saviour Descents”

³⁷ *sūta jñāsi bhadrām te bhagavān sātvatām patih.
devakyām vasudevasya jāto yasya cikīrṣayā..
tasya karmāṇyudārāṇi parigītāni sūribhiḥ.
brūhi naḥ śraddadhānānām līlayā dadhataḥ kalāḥ..
athā'khyāhi harer dhimann avatāra-kathāḥ lubhāḥ.
līlā vidadhataḥ svairam īśvarasyā'tma-māyayā..
vayaṁ tu na vityṣyāma uttamaḥ-lōka-vikrame.
yac chṛṇvatām rasa-jñānām svādu svādu pade pade..
kṛtavān kila karmāni saha rāmeṇa keśavaḥ
atimartyāni bhagavān gūḍhaḥ kapaṭa-mānuṣaḥ.. 1.1.12, 17-20*
³⁸ *matsyā'īva-kacchapa-nṛsimha-varāha-haṁsa-
rājanya-vipra-vibudheṣu kṛtā'vatārah.
tvam pāsi nas tri-bhuvanaḥ ca yathā'dhunela
bhāram bhuvo hara yadūttama vandanaḥ te.. 10.2.40*

(*Līlāvatāra*). Again the *Bhāgavata* declares: "The supreme *Puruṣa* takes to the *guṇa*-reals of *Prakṛti* and thus assumes the names Hari, Brahmā and Hara i.e., the holy trinity".³⁰ "Supreme *Puruṣa*" has been used by the *Bhāgavata* as an epithet of Kṛṣṇa.⁴⁰ This description of Śuka brings home the fact that Kṛṣṇa is the source of the holy trinity. Again the verse, quoted above, says "*parama-Puruṣa*" to be the source of the same trinity. Therefore Kṛṣṇa and "*parama-Puruṣa*" are one and the same person. While the *Bhāgavata* narrates stories about different Descents they resolve into the episodes of Kṛṣṇa; for, the Descents are none else than the different forms of Kṛṣṇa.

As regards the Kṛṣṇa Descent the *Bhāgavata* concludes after giving a long list of different Descents that while the Descents described so far are "*Amṣa-kalās*", Kṛṣṇa is none else than *Bhagavān* himself.⁴¹ The comments of Śrīdhara on this verse bring out the uniqueness of Kṛṣṇa. "Kṛṣṇa is perfect (*pūrṇa*)", he says, "because all potencies are seen to be in full swing in this Descent. Though the other Descents like Fish and Tortoise do emanate from the same Reality i.e., *Bhagavān* yet all the potencies are not brought into play in the case of other Descents."⁴² It may be mentioned in this context that the Bengal School of *Vaiṣṇavism* calls^{42a} Kṛṣṇa to be perfect because of his majesty, play, lute⁴³ and exquisite form.⁴⁴ Thus according to the express

³⁰ *sattvaṁ rajas tama iti prakṛter guṇās tair
yuktaḥ paraḥ puruṣa eka ihā'sya dhatte.
sthityādaye hari-virīñci-hareti-samjñāḥ* 1.2.23 abc

⁴⁰ *yasyām vai śrūyamāṇāyām kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe* 1.7.7 ab

⁴¹ *ete cā'mṣa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* 1.3.28 ab

⁴² Śrīdhara comments on this verse (1.3.28) as follows:—
*tatra matsyādīnām avatāratvena sarvajñatve sarva-śaktimattve'pi
yathopayogam eva jñāna-kriyā-śakyāviśkaraṇam kṛṣṇas tu sākṣāt bha-
gavān nārāyaṇa eva āviṣkṛta-sarva-śakti-mattvāt.*

^{42a} *Laghu-bhāgavatāmrta* pp. 297-99

⁴³ *vividha-gopa-caraneṣu vidagdho
veṇu-vādya urudhā nija-śikṣāḥ.
tava suta satī yadā'dhara-bimbē
datta-veṇur anayat svara-jātīḥ..
savanāśas tad upadhārya sureśāḥ
śakra-śarva-parameṣṭhi-purogāḥ.
kavaya ānata-kandhara-cittāḥ
kaśmalaṁ yayur a-niścita-tattvāḥ..* 10.35.14-15

⁴⁴ *kā śtryaṅga te kala-padā'yata-mūrcchitena
sammohitā'rya-caritān na calet tri-lokyām.
trailokyā-saubhagam idaṁ ca nirikṣya rūpaṁ
yad go-dviija-druma-mṛgāḥ pulakānyavibhram..* 10.29.40

view of the *Bhāgavata*, Kṛṣṇa Descent is a perfect manifestation of Reality while the other Descents are only partial revelations of it.

The observations of Śrīdhara are suggestive. They indicate, for example, that all Descents are consubstantial because they are all traced to the same reality viz, *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality. Though basically they are all one and the same yet they differ from one another in so far as *all* potencies are in full play in some while *some* of the potencies are active others passive in others. Thus a Descent is called a partial revelation when specific potencies are in action while another is called perfect or full revelation when all the potencies are operative. Whether a Descent will express all potencies or not depends upon *Bhagavān* who descends in different forms. So, the dormant state of some of the potencies in a particular Descent does not imply limitation. A self-imposed restraint on the part of *Bhagavān* indicates, on the contrary, his sovereignty.

Though the hermits in their questions put to Sūta suggest a different status for the Kṛṣṇa Descent and that status has hitherto been taken to mean perfect manifestation of *Bhagavān*, the eternal Kṛṣṇa, yet other passages of the *Bhāgavata* seem to be opposed to this view. At several places,⁴⁵ the *Bhāgavata* appears to have described Kṛṣṇa to be a partial (*Amśa* or *Kalā*) manifestation of *Bhagavān*. So, the passages under consideration have to be reconciled to the view expressed above that Kṛṣṇa was the perfect manifestation, before Kṛṣṇa's highest status can be accepted.

In answer to the question raised here the following may be suggested: Though the *Bhāgavata* has sometimes described Kṛṣṇa as partial manifestation yet this description is compatible with the view that Kṛṣṇa was a perfect manifestation on the following grounds:—Firstly, it has been stated before that the eternal Kṛṣṇa as well as the historical Kṛṣṇa may simultaneously be many though remaining one and only one at the same time. If

⁴⁵ *bhagavān api viśvā'tmā bhaktānām a-bhayamkaraḥ.*
āviveśā'mśabhāgena mana ānaka-dundubheḥ.. 10.2.16
dvijā'tma-jā me yuvayor didṛkṣuṇā
mayopanitā bhuvi dharmā-guptaye.
kalāvatirṇāvavaner bhārā'surān
hatveha bhūyas tvarayetam anti me.. 10.89.58 etc.

we take into consideration the infinite manifestations of the eternal Kṛṣṇa—all manifestations being perfect—then one particular Kṛṣṇa i.e., the historical Kṛṣṇa may appear to be just a part of the congregation of so many Kṛṣṇas. Secondly, the *Bhāgavata* after offering a long list of Descents including Rāma and Kṛṣṇa concludes that all these Descents emerge from *Puruṣa* and are therefore either “*Amśa*” or “*Kalā*” of the latter. But in the same line of the verse the *Bhāgavata* declares Kṛṣṇa to be *Bhagavān* himself i.e., “*Pūrṇa*”. Thus the same context declares Kṛṣṇa to be both “*Amśa*” and “*Pūrṇa*”. It cannot be said, to solve this contradiction, that while “*Amśa*” refers to the historical Kṛṣṇa “*Pūrṇa*” relates to the eternal Kṛṣṇa because even the Kṛṣṇa Descent that falls in the stream of Descents under consideration has the epithet “*Bhagavān*”. If this Kṛṣṇa Descent be intended by the *Bhāgavata* to be a partial manifestation why should the *Bhāgavata* use that epithet for that Descent? So, the Kṛṣṇa Descent, described by the *Bhāgavata* along with other Descents, and Kṛṣṇa said to be the *Bhagavān* himself are presumably one and the same person. Another suggestion may however be offered to solve this riddle. The *Bhāgavata* in the same context observes that different types of Descents emerge from *Puruṣa* like so many streamlets from an inexhaustible reservoir of water.⁴⁶ It is possible to conceive on the basis of this statement that like other Descents Kṛṣṇa Descent may for the sake of harmony be taken to emerge from *Puruṣa* and thus like other Descents be taken as a partial manifestation. On the other hand in so far as all potencies were fully manifested in Kṛṣṇa he might be held to be a perfect manifestation in the line suggested by Śrīdhara. Thirdly, Śrīdhara discusses the term “*amśa-bhāga*” with reference to the Kṛṣṇa Descent⁴⁷ and after proposing several alternatives concludes that in any case the Kṛṣṇa Descent is intended to be the perfect manifestation. For, otherwise the statement that Kṛṣṇa is *Bhagavān* himself cannot be reconciled. Fourthly, the *Bhāgavata* from the ultimate point

⁴⁶ *avatārāḥ hyasamkhyeyā hareḥ sattva-nidher dvijāḥ..*
yathā'vidāsinaḥ kulyāḥ sarasaḥ syuḥ sahasraśaḥ.. 1.3.26

⁴⁷ *athā'ham amśa-bhāgena devakyāḥ putratām śubhe..*
prāpsyāmi tvam yaśodāyām nanda-patnyām bhaviṣyasi.. 10.2.9

of view holds all the Descents to be the highest Reality.⁴⁸ It is therefore possible to imagine from this standpoint that all Descents display their potencies in full vigour but we attribute our inability to grasp them to the potencies and thus call them unexpressed, just as we say that *Bhagavān* is asleep when in fact we are sleeping over *Bhagavān*. Thus even Kṛṣṇa may appear to be a partial manifestation though the wise can see through his perfect nature. With the extension of the frontiers of our knowledge all Descents would reveal themselves to be perfect. It is in this sense that Śrīdhara remarks that the discernment of a partial manifestation does not refer to the partial character of Reality but it indicates the limited character of our observation.⁴⁹

BIOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORICAL KṚṢṆA

Now that the historical Kṛṣṇa has been established to be the perfect manifestation of the eternal Kṛṣṇa one might concentrate on the biography of the former. It is remarkable to observe that though the *Bhāgavata* has dealt with various Descents yet none except Kṛṣṇa has been described from the beginning to the end. Thus the biography of Kṛṣṇa is a noble exception to the general rule that some particular section of the life of a Descent has been thrown light upon to realise a particular end for which *Bhagavān* had taken that particular form.

The biography of Kṛṣṇa, as mentioned before, falls into three parts. His early life was spent in Vṛndāvana. Then he went to Mathurā and became its king having killed the tyrant maternal uncle, Kāṁsa. Subsequently he shifted his capital to Dvārakā. His activities at Vṛndāvana are distinguished from those at Mathurā and Dvārakā in as much as the former always inspired awe in the minds of its inhabitants.⁵⁰ Thus while

⁴⁸ *yat kiñ ca loka bhaga-van mahas-vad
ojaḥ-sahas-vad bala-vat kṣamā-vat.
śrī-hri-vibhūtyātma-vad adbhutārṇam
tattvaṁ param rūpa-vad a-svarūpaṁ.. 2.6.45*

⁴⁹ Śrīdhara while commenting on the verse "*tatra' mīṣṇā'vatīrṇasya viṣṇor vīryāṇi śarṇsa naḥ*" (10.1.2) makes the following comment:—*amīṣṇeti pratītyabhiprāyeṇoktam.*

⁵⁰ *te tatra varṇitam gopaiḥ pūtanā'gamanā'dikam.
śrutvā tan-nidhanam svasti śiśoḥ cā'san suvismitāḥ.. 10.6.42
śrutvā tad vismitā gopā gopyaś cā'ti-priyā'dṛtāḥ.
pretyā'gatam ivatsukyād aikṣanta tṛṇitekṣaṇāḥ.. 10.11.54 etc.*

Kṛṣṇa's activities at Vṛndāvana revealed at every step his majesty and thus the natural was over-arched by the supernatural, Mathurā and Dvārakā experienced Kṛṣṇa as a careful householder and majesty was subordinated to his human nature. The Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* is by and large the Kṛṣṇa of Dvārakā. Of all the activities at the three regions those at Vṛndāvana are the highest because the sovereignty of Kṛṣṇa is revealed therein and of all the activities at Vṛndāvana the "*rāsa-līlā*" reigns supreme.

An enquiry into the purpose for which Kṛṣṇa was incarnated will throw light upon the supremacy of "*rāsa-līlā*". The *Bhāgavata* has recorded different views on this point: (1) Some consider Kṛṣṇa to have incarnated for extending the fame of Yudhiṣṭhira as a righteous monarch; (2) Others take him to have revealed himself for the welfare of the earth and for the destruction of the demons; (3) Still others opine that Kṛṣṇa took a tangible form for providing such activities as would sanctify the memory and ears of the people constantly tormented in this world by false knowledge and greed.⁵¹ The last view is supported by Kuntī, the great devotee of Kṛṣṇa and the mother of the *Pāṇḍavas*.⁵² And it shows that the historical Kṛṣṇa assumed a human form to instill by his life and preachings into the minds of the commoners the belief that the ideals Kṛṣṇa stood for were, after all, attainable by human endeavour. Those ideals could actually be implemented by human mortals as they were done by Kṛṣṇa who was apparently another human individual like others. Thus his human form was intended to touch upon the vital chord of our life for what was possible for one individual should be within the reach of another.

In the *Bhāgavata* tradition the status of Brahmā is sub-

⁵¹ *kecid āhur ajam jātam puṇya-slokaśya kīrtaye.
yadoḥ priyaśyā'nvavāye malayaśyeva candanam..
apare vāsudevaśya devakyaṁ yācito'bhyagāt.
ajas tvam aśya kṣemāya vadhāya ca sura-dviṣām..
bhārā'vatarapāyā'nye bhuvō nāva ivodadhau.
śidantya bhūri bhāreṇa jāto hyātma-bhuvā'rthitah..
bhav'e'smin kṛṣṇamānānam avidyā-kāma-karmabhiḥ.
śravaṇa-smaraṇā'rthāṇi kariṣyann iti kecana.. 1.8.32-35*

⁵² *śṛṇvanti gāyanti ṣṇantyaabhikṣaśaḥ
smaranti nandanti tavehitam janāḥ.
ta eva paśyantyacireṇa tāvakam
bhava-pravāho paramam padāmbujam.. 1.8.36*

lime. To Brahmā was propounded the *Bhāgavata* by Nārāyaṇa for the first time.⁵³ And this is what Brahmā observes in connection with the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa: "O Master, though you are undifferentiated *per se* yet you assume diverse forms just to exhilarate the minds of those who have taken refuge in you".⁵⁴ So, on the evidence of Brahmā the eternal Kṛṣṇa had descended as the historical Kṛṣṇa to inspire pleasure in the minds of his devotees.

It may be contended that "*rāsa-līlā*" was commenced by Kṛṣṇa for his own pleasure as the introductory verse of the five chapters on "*rāsa*" (*rāsa-pañcā'dhyāyī*) indicates. The verse in question declares: "Having observed those moon-lit nights infatuated with the fragrance of sweet-smelling "*mallikā*"-flowers *Bhagavān* intended to indulge in sports with the aid of "*Yoga-māyā*".⁵⁵ Here the phrase "intended to indulge" (*manas cakre*) is significant from the grammatical point of view. The usage of "*ātmanepada*" in "*cakre*" suggests that *Bhagavān* intended to enjoy himself in the company of the *gopīs*, for "*ātmanepada*" is employed when the subject of the verb to which the "*ātmanepada*"-suffix is attached intends to appropriate the fruit of the action indicated by the verb in question. If therefore "*rāsa-līlā*" was undertaken for his own satisfaction then surely this cannot be his best sport as claimed before and this is also against the purpose of the Kṛṣṇa Descent, viz, to offer pleasure to his devotees, as indicated in the view of Brahmā.

It may be said in answer that "*rāsa-līlā*" is the climax that reveals at its best the true nature of Kṛṣṇa as all love. Śrīdhara also comments to the same effect: "Among the Descents Rāma or Kṛṣṇa exhibit the triumph of love".⁵⁶ Now, love is like a river in spate. When surging waves flow down its main stream, they break upon the brinks of the river as well. Thus both the banks are affected. So, supposing

⁵³ *tene brahma idaṁ ya ādi-kavaye* 1.1.1 b

⁵⁴ *prapañcam niṣ-prapañco'pi viḍambayasi bhūtale.*
prapañna-janatā nanda-sandohaṁ prathitum prabho.. 10.14.37

⁵⁵ *bhagavān api tāḥ rātriḥ śaradotphulla-mallikāḥ.*
vikīrya rantum manas cakre yoga-māyām upāśritāḥ.. 10.29.1

⁵⁶ Śrīdhara comments:—

līlā'vatāreṣu īpsitaṁ jagataḥ premā'spadaṁ śrī-rāma-kṛṣṇādi-janma on
11.11.20

Kṛṣṇa indulged in sports with the *gopīs* for his own satisfaction, yet it was no less a satisfaction on the part of the *gopīs* as well. For, ideal love is reciprocal and the satisfaction derived from it is shared equally by both the parties. This point is borne out by the *Bhāgavata* when in recognition of the supreme love dedicated to him by the *gopīs* Kṛṣṇa exclaims:—"I have no adequate return for this love for me. So let this unique gift (of love) be returned to you in exchange".⁵⁷ It shows that Kṛṣṇa is offering the same love to the *gopīs*, which they had offered to Kṛṣṇa. In other words, Kṛṣṇa promises to love them with the same intensity as they had brought to bear upon their love for Kṛṣṇa. It is in this sense that Kṛṣṇa is said to have exhilarated the *gopīs* though he himself is perpetually settled on his innate pleasure.⁵⁸ The point is that Kṛṣṇa indulged in "*rāsa-līlā*" not for his own sake but for the sake of the *gopīs*; for, being self-contented (*ātmā'rāma*) he does not require any extraneous condition for the realisation of any pleasure which still remains unachieved.

In fact, from the ultimate point of view the *gopīs* are the potencies of *Bhagavān* and as such they are identical with him. So, what was a pleasure to him was a pleasure for the *gopīs* and what was a pleasure for the *gopīs* reverted to himself. The devotees of all times are, like the *gopīs*, a part of his being and therefore the same rule of pleasure—its reciprocity and the unity of the enjoyers—holds good for them as well. So it is pleasure of the Reality derived from Divine Sport. This is "*rāsa-līlā*" which belongs to the innate nature of Kṛṣṇa—whether of the eternal Kṛṣṇa or the historical Kṛṣṇa.

One may pause here a while for understanding the import of "*rāsa-līlā*" in relation to one's own life. Man is striving for values—fame, money, beauty, philanthropy and what not. He is subjected to chequered experiences to realise his ends. These experiences are emotion, activity and enlightenment with perhaps an admixture of disillusionment. Whether

⁵⁷ *na pārāye'haṁ nir-avadya-samyujāṁ
sva-sādhu-kṛtyaṁ vibudhā'yuṣā'pi vaḥ.
yā mā'bhajan dur-jara-geha-śṛṅkhālāḥ
saṁvṛtā tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhuṇā...* 10.32.22

⁵⁸ *iti viklavitaṁ tāsāṁ śrutvā yogeśvareśvaraḥ.
prahasya sa-dayaṁ gopīr ātmā'rāmo'pyarīramat...* 10.29.42

he succeeds or not, willynilly, he confronts varying experiences. But one thing is settled: Though the experiences vary and he drifts along these fleeting shadows, his own self is the only unchangeable reality among the changeables. His intelligence can exhibit its strength and vitality by subjecting all objects to minutest scrutiny but the scrutinizer is never challenged. For the existence of doubt and cross-examination postulates the existence of the doubter. *Cogito ergo sum*. So the great philosopher Vācaspati Miśra (900 A.D.) in his gloss on the *Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara remarks: "One cannot entertain the idea that one does not exist or that one does exist or not".⁵⁹ In the *Mahābhārata* the same truth is borne out in the episode of Yudhiṣṭhira and the crane.⁶⁰ In answer to the query as to what is the most amazing thing in this world Yudhiṣṭhira said: "Beings die away everyday under the very nose of others who are still alive. But the latter still do believe that they are going to live on and never to die". So at the back of everyday activity—far away from the field of metaphysical discussion—is the innate belief in man, unshakable by any contrary arguments, that he is to exist. This is the primordial concept of the eternality of the soul.

Thus the soul continues to exist for ever. But what for? Is there any mission which it has to realise or does it just go on aimlessly like a floating cloud? In actual experience man is always regulated in his endeavour by a purpose. His voluntary action is always motivated by the desire to achieve something by his efforts. And this anticipation of an end distinguishes a rational being from the rest of the animal world which is guided by blind instinct. Thus man strives for certain values or for what he thinks to be values. When the values are realised he is happy and contented. In the ultimate analysis it will be found that fame and wealth, beauty and philanthropy are values in so far as they all conduce to happiness. Even the selfless devotion of a wife for her husband or the unique sacrifice of a mother for her son or a battalion's courting

⁵⁹ *na hi jātu kaścid atra sandigdhe ahaṁ vā nā'haṁ vā iti. na ca viparyasyati nā'haṁ eveti.* Vācaspati Miśra on the *Adhyāṣa-Bhāṣya* of Ācārya Śaṅkara

⁶⁰ *ahanyahani bhūtāni gacchanti yama-mandiram. teṣā āyuṣyam icchanti kim ācāryam ataḥ param..* MB 3.312.116

death for the sake of saving its mother country—in fact, all expressions of self-abnegation—ultimately boil down to the satisfaction of the person or persons concerned. That is why the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* declares: “The husband does not become dear to the wife for the sake of the husband but for the wife’s sake . . . sons are not dear for the sons but for the loving parents”³²⁶¹ In the same context the *Upaniṣad* arrives at this deduction that all become dear because they are endearing to the soul. Hence the happiness of the soul is the ultimate end to which our efforts are directed.

In order to be eternal the soul has to be distinct from matter which is liable to change and subsequent destruction. So the soul has to be distinct from the physical body or even from the psychological being (*sūkṣma-śarīra*). Though the soul seems to be inextricably linked up with mind and body yet the soul is not a perpetual flux but is a witness thereof. The soul is not a part of the stream but an interested onlooker. The stream interests the soul in so far as it helps to stimulate the sense of pleasure in it.

But the human tragedy lies in the tremendous amount of unpleasant feelings that always go with the sense of happiness. Whatever is grasped with a view to having pleasure turns out to be of great disadvantage. There is no light without a peal of thunder, no rose without a bed of thorns.

So while search for pleasure is ingrained in the soul the methodology of striving for it has to be changed. One should cultivate the art of doing things in a way which ensures pleasure and eliminates pain for all times to come. The clever device of doing things in such a way is called “*karma-yoga*”.

In order to eliminate the troubles of the world the individual soul clings to *Bhagavān* for peace and happiness. The glimpses of happiness that the individual soul derives from material objects are now felt to have emanated from that inexhaustible source of happiness, the *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*. One now turns to God to have happiness unsophisticated by sorrow. One may crave for his pity or for enlightenment that discards all limitations so far imposed upon the individual soul. In

³²⁶¹ *na vā are patyuh kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavatyātmanas tu kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati* etc. BU 4.5.6

the ultimate, the realisation dawns upon the votary. It is the state of absolute freedom. One now begins to realise that happiness glistening through the world was neither a part of material objects or even of God. It was the radiation of the soul's innate pristine glory—its own native bliss. Here is the fullest flowering of the soul's hidden treasures—the perfection of what was potential in it so far. In other words, the votary now realises to be the *Bhagavān* himself. He is now the only reality reigning supreme. Here is the complete satisfaction with himself, the complete realisation of divine ecstasy. This is "*rāsa-līlā*", the Divine Sport of the soul with its own self—the profoundest play with the fullest maturity of its own potentialities. The whole thing is so spontaneous as contra-distinguished from material existence vitiated all the time with obstacles and frustrations that the only term that approximates this free activity is "sport". Hence "*rāsa-līlā*" i.e., the sport of the realisation of the ecstasy of the soul cannot but be the *summum bonum* of all spiritual aspirations.

Thus "*rāsa-līlā*" being the climax of all the sports of *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa, the great devotee Uddhava remarks:—"The divine grace that was showered upon the *gopīs* on the occasion of "*rāsa-līlā*" has transcended all other graces. Nor does the goddess of wealth (*Lakṣmī*) enjoy it from Nārāyaṇa. Nor do the divine damsels and goddesses claim to have it from their masters".⁶² In this sport devotion is equated with love and love with bliss. Of all the sports of Kṛṣṇa, therefore, *Vṛndāvana* sports are the sweetest and of all the sports of Kṛṣṇa at *Vṛndāvana* "*rāsa-līlā*" stands the highest.

IS RĀSA-LĪLĀ A SOCIAL CRIME ?

As "*rāsa-līlā*" represents the zenith of Kṛṣṇa's sports and is the climax of all spiritual aspirations it deserves to be exonerated from criticism. In fact there is age-old criticism against Kṛṣṇa's association with the *gopīs*, of which "*rāsa-līlā*" is the peak. The *gopīs* are described to be others' wives

⁶² *nā'yam śrīyo'ṅga u nīlānta-rateḥ prasādaḥ
suar-yoṣitām nalina-gandha-rucām kuto'nyāḥ.
rāsotsave'sya bhuja-daṇḍa-grhīta-kaṇṭha-
labdhā'siṣām ya ud-agāt vraja-vallavinām.. 10.47.60*

in the *Bhāgavata*. Should Kṛṣṇa, the manifestation of *Bhagavān*, indulge in their company in a way that invites easy criticism? The behaviour of Kṛṣṇa towards the *gopīs*—seems to amount to flagrant violation of social discipline. This can least be expected of Kṛṣṇa who is supposed to be the torch-bearer of good conduct. Does it not on the contrary set a bad example for others who are instinctively steeped already in carnal satisfaction?

This objection on moral grounds has been anticipated by the *Bhāgavata* itself. The emperor Parīkṣit who was waiting for his final hour felt perplexed as to the import of this behaviour on the part of Kṛṣṇa. He therefore enquired: "O Śuka, the Lord of the universe had descended to establish law and order and to eliminate all evils that threaten the moral health of the society. Why should Kṛṣṇa, the protector, propounder and upholder of morality, act otherwise by inflicting outrage on others' wives? Kṛṣṇa is, after all, self-contented, being the manifestation of *Bhagavān*. So he must have had a purpose behind this behaviour. Please dispel this misconception for me".⁸⁸ While the noble king Parīkṣit whose mind was moving at the time in the direction of salvation was subjected to this misconception, no mortal need be blamed if the same question hovers over his mind as well.

Attempts have been made in different ages from different quarters to meet this question. For example, the *Bhāgavata* itself has tried to meet this situation. Then comes Śrīdhara, the nonsectarian and esteemed commentator, to face it. Thereafter the different Sects of *Vaiṣṇavism*, that draw their inspiration from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, have tackled this problem. In view of the serious character of the criticism which threatens the very existence of sublime quality in the concept of "*rāsa-līlā*", one may be pardoned if the different viewpoints are now presented on this burning question. The persistence of the problem through the ages shows its seriousness as the answers attempted

śrī rājovāca.

⁸⁸ *saṁsthāpanāya dharmasya praśamāyetaśasya ca.
avatīrṇo hi bhagavān amśena jagad-īśvaraḥ..
sa katham dharmā-setūnām vaktā kartā bhirakṣitā.
pratīpam ācarad brahman para-dārā bhimarśanam..
āpta-kāmo yadu-patiḥ kṛtavān vai jugupsitam.
kim-abhiprāya etaṁ naḥ saṁśayaṁ chindhi su-vrata* 10.33.26-28

by different Schools at different periods bring out their intellectual acumen and their brilliance of devotionism.

The *Bhāgavata* has adduced through the mouth of Śuka two reasons to justify the conduct of Kṛṣṇa. It admits, for argument's sake, the fault levelled against him and pleads that extraordinary persons are not to be judged by the ordinary laws of morality. As fire consumes whatever is offered to it so crime loses its sting with reference to a powerful person.⁶⁴ Killing a person is murder but a judge inflicting death sentence on a murderer is not a murderer but an administrator of justice. This first answer is from the ordinary point of view. From the point of metaphysics, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme soul of all—both of the *gopīs* and of their husbands—and therefore if a *gopī* married a person it amounted to the marriage of one soul to another—or more precisely—the soul, one and only one, marrying its own self. Different persons are merely different bodies assumed by the soul to further the cause of Divine Sport.⁶⁵ This is the second answer. As to the purpose for which Kṛṣṇa had behaved as he did, the *Bhāgavata* says that his behaviour was intended to induce the ordinary people to spirituality. They were steeped in carnal pleasure. So they would naturally be captivated by the stories about Kṛṣṇa, which bore the semblance of lavish epicurism.⁶⁶ So Kṛṣṇa's behaviour was a pleasant device to switch the ordinary people off to spiritual life.

Śrīdhara at the outset of his commentary on the 29th chapter of the tenth *skānda* of the *Bhāgavata* expresses the view⁶⁷ that the final import of Kṛṣṇa's dalliances with the *gopīs* is just the reverse of what the ordinary people think about the five chapters on

⁶⁴ *dharma-vyatikramo dṛṣṭa īśvarānām ca sāhasam.
tejīyasām na doṣāya vahnēḥ sarva-bhujo yathā..* 10.33.29

⁶⁵ *gopīnām tat-pātinām ca sarveṣām eva dehinām.
yo'ntaś carati so'dhyakṣaḥ kṛīḍaneneha deha-bhāk* 10.33.35

⁶⁶ *anugrahāya bhūtānām mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitāḥ.
bhajate tādṛśiḥ kṛīḍā yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet..* 10.33.36

⁶⁷ Śrīdhara comments on the alleged social impropriety of Kṛṣṇa:—
*nanu viparītam idam, para-dāra-vinodena kandarpa-vijetrīva-pratīteḥ ?
maivam. "yoga-māyām upāśritaḥ", "ātmā-rāmo'pyarīramat", "sākṣān man-
matha-manmathaḥ" "ātmanyavaruddha-saurataḥ" ityādiṣu svāntaryā'bhi-
dhānāt. tasmād rāsa-kṛīḍā-vidambanaṁ kāma-vijaya-khyāpanāya ityeva
tattvam. kiñca śṛṅgāra-kathā'padeśena viśeṣato nīṣṭī-pareyam pañcā-
dhyāyī iti.*

"*rāsa*". In fact, the five chapters embody the story of progressive triumph of Kṛṣṇa over sex. The phrases like "Kṛṣṇa resorted to *Yoga-māyā* for the purpose of sport with the *gopīs*", "he gladdened others though he himself was settled in absolute satiety", "he was the precious rarity even for the god of love"—are pointers to the conquest of mortal love by Kṛṣṇa. So the five chapters⁶⁸ are meant for extinguishing carnal desire and not for kindling them. This rules out the possibility of any misconception about the behaviour of Kṛṣṇa.

The *Nimbārka* School does not recognise the problem at all. It admits three wives of Kṛṣṇa—Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and Śrī-Rādhā. In the *Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-stava* by Nimbārka this is borne out in no ambiguous terms. At the beginning of that work Nimbārka states in the laudatory verse: "I contemplate that goddess who surrounded by thousands of friends is embellishing the left side of Kṛṣṇa. She is the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu and she fulfils all desires".⁶⁹ The commentary of Puruṣottama lays down on the basis of a *Rk-pariṣiṣṭa-śruti* which describes the eternal association between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, that as Rādhā is perpetually related to Kṛṣṇa she cannot be another person's wife for association with another man's wife is bound to be casual and not permanent. The commentator goes further and elicits the three wives of Kṛṣṇa from another portion of the said *Śruti*. The *Śruti* states: "Rukmiṇī is the creator of the world. She is the primordial matter and is associated with Kṛṣṇa just as *Vraja-stṛī* (Śrī-Rādhā) is". The commentator remarks that this verse also implies Satyabhāmā, another wife of Kṛṣṇa. By "*vraja-stṛī*" Śrī-Rādhā is meant and the "*sakhīs*" (friends) mentioned in the description of Nimbārka in the verse quoted above are her female servants. Thus Kṛṣṇa had three wives of whom Satyabhāmā and Rukmiṇī served him at Mathurā while Śrī-Rādhā was his first wife at Vṛndāvana. While Śrī-Rādhā had enjoyed the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's first love Satyabhāmā and Rukmiṇī were his companions in executing domestic duties. From the stand point of love Kṛṣṇa's link with Śrī-Rādhā is the sweetest.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ 10.29-33.

⁶⁹ *Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-stava* by Nimbārka p. 70.

⁷⁰ *Vedānta-ratna-mañjūṣā* by Puruṣottama pp. 70-72.

The line of Nimbārka's approach appears to be oversimplification of the issue. His contention not only refuses to entertain casual relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their eternal abode viz, *Goloka* but it also denies any speck of misconception with regard to the historical Kṛṣṇa's contact with the *gopīs* including Śrī-Rādhā. If Śrī-Rādhā be taken as the married wife of Kṛṣṇa from the sociological point of view and the other *gopīs* are relegated to the humble status of being her maidservants then the burden will devolve upon the Nimbārka School to explain the *Bhāgavata* description of the *gopīs* (including Śrī-Rādhā) being others' wives. It is also not plausible to conceive Kṛṣṇa expressing amorous behaviour with the *gopīs* who were nothing better than maidservants. So the major portion of the Kṛṣṇa story at Vṛndāvana as depicted in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* does hardly fit in with the doctrine preached by the Nimbārka School.

The Vallabha School displays greater ingenuity in this respect. It interprets the Kṛṣṇa episodes at Vṛndāvana in the light of symbolism. Thus the birth of Kṛṣṇa is the manifestation of the divine form (*śrī-mūrti*) in the mind of the devotee. Instruction of Vasudeva to the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana for leaving Vṛndāvana and repatriation to Gokula is the instruction of the teacher as to the obstacles in the path of devotion. The death of the demoness Pūtānā is the destruction of *Avidyā* which binds man to external objects. The devastation of the demon Śakaṭa is the severance of all contacts with external objects. The panorama of the universal form (*viśva-rūpa*) revealed before the awe-stricken eyes of Yaśodā is the awakening of the devotee to his true nature in dreams. In this way Kṛṣṇa's childhood sports may be explained.

Now begin sports at Vṛndāvana. When the obstructing sins are annihilated and God's grace shines upon the votary then listening to God's name etc. leads to the development of "*bīja-bhāva*" (a devotional disposition) which, grown in intensity, destroys the *guṇa*-reals. Thereafter by service (*sevā*) the devotional disposition develops into a passion (*vyāsana*) and *Brahma-bhāva* (identity with *Brahman*) is achieved upon the destruction of the *guṇa*-reals. Revelation of *Puruṣottama* (Nārāyaṇa) follows *Brahma-bhāva*. Subsequently, the gross

and the subtle bodies are destroyed and the devotee then wins a body fit for the enjoyment of his sports. Finally the votary enters the region of eternal sport. This is salvation.⁷¹

It is interesting to observe that the progressive march of devotion reveals *Brahman*, *Paramātmān* and *Bhagavān* in hierarchical order. This view falls in line with the approach adopted by us. Bālakṛṣṇa-bhaṭṭa, the author of *Prameya-ratnāṛṇava*, speaks about the revelation of *Bhagavān* on the basis of the verse in "*rāsa-pāñcā'dhyāyī*" viz, "With a smile on his face Kṛṣṇa appeared before the *gopīs*".⁷² Similarly, the surrender of both the physical and subtle bodies as preparatory to the entrance to the region of *Goloka* is traced to another verse of the *Bhāgavata*, viz, "Though the *gopīs* had developed a fascination for Kṛṣṇa yet they abandoned their physical bodies because their shackles of *guṇa*-reals were broken by the association of Kṛṣṇa".⁷³ All these indicate that the author attempted to establish the viewpoint of the *Vallabha* School on the bedrock of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, so that the said view might not appear to be a mere fabrication of imagination.

The theory of annihilation of bodies before the entrance to the spiritual region of *Goloka* meets the allegation against Kṛṣṇa. After all, sexual intemperance presupposes the existence of a physical body and social laws of morality are based upon it as well. While one has to quit the physical form before one is entitled to enter *Goloka* with a view to indulging in sports with Kṛṣṇa, the violation of the social law of morality has no bearing upon such a state of affairs. The *Vallabha* School does postulate another form for the votary with which he enjoys the company of Kṛṣṇa but it is not a physical form but spiritual built up of spiritual matter (*viśuddha-sattva*). So the association with Kṛṣṇa, the region at which the association is forged, the body with which the votary approaches—are all spiritual and therefore the allegation of moral intemperance both with regard to

⁷¹ *Prameya-ratnāṛṇava* pp. 39-44.

⁷² *tāsām āvir-abhūt saurīḥ smayamāna-mukhā'mbujāḥ.
pitā'mbara-dharaḥ sragvī sāksān manmatha-manmathaḥ..* 10.32.2.

⁷³ *tam eva paramātmānam jāra-buddhyā'pi saṅgatāḥ.
jahur guṇa-mayaṁ dehaṁ sadyaḥ prakṣiṇa-bandhanāḥ..* 10.29.11.

Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* loses its significance in the present case. In other words, "rāsa" is to be understood as a feature of the eternal Kṛṣṇa and not of the historical Kṛṣṇa at all.

In the Bengal School of *Vaiṣṇavism* the solution to the problem has taken two different directions. Jīva Gosvāmin and Viśvanātha Cakravartin have tackled the problem in their commentaries on the *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi* of Rūpa Gosvāmin. Though they have started from the same place their presuppositions have varied and their attitudes have differed so widely that each deserves separate consideration.

Jīva maintains that love (*śṛṅgāra*) in its primordial sense means purity. Therefore ideal love cannot be anything but pure. Now, the allegation of moral violation on the part of Kṛṣṇa must be confined to the manifest sport (*prakāṣa-līlā*) of Kṛṣṇa; for, the unmanifest sport (*a-prakāṣa-līlā*) of Kṛṣṇa in the eternal abode where the *gopīs* are the intrinsic potencies (*īva-rūpa-śakti*) of Kṛṣṇa and to that extent his own wives, is perfectly untouched by any sociological implication of immorality. But as the manifest sport (*prakāṣa-līlā*) is but a projection of the unmanifest sport revealed in *Goloka*, in other words, as history is the manifestation or revelation of the eternal Principle, the former cannot be subjected to criticism as the latter is not. The fundamental principle of unity between the eternal Kṛṣṇa and his potencies governs the association between the historical Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. And if unity (*tādātmya*) counteracts the idea of "belonging to others" in the case of the eternal Kṛṣṇa it should do the same with regard to the relationship of the *gopīs* with the historical Kṛṣṇa. Hence no body should mistake the relationship of the *gopīs* with Kṛṣṇa for taking license with others' wives.

One may however take this explanation as well an oversimplification of the real issue. For, in face of the express description in the *Bhāgavata* of the *gopīs* being others' wives the consideration of *gopīs* being the wives of Kṛṣṇa may seem to be difficult to maintain. The position of Jīva may appear to be as weak as that of the *Nimbārka* School since both of them appear to go against the love story of Kṛṣṇa, as presented in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*.

But Jīva has improved upon the *Nimbārka* School in one

respect. He has tried to explain away the description in the *Bhāgavata* of the *gopīs* being others' wives. His arguments in this respect deserve careful consideration here. Jīva reads a profound significance in that description which paints the *gopīs* as others' wives. He draws upon a passage of the *Bharata-nāṭya-śāstra* for this purpose: "The intensity of love reaches its climax when it is impeded by constant obstacles and the meeting of the lovers takes place in concealment and that also very scarcely". So if one compares between the normal love of a married couple and that of two lovers unmarried to each other, one would find that the irregular love is characterized by a high pitch of emotion which sometimes prevails over all. Instances of such irregular contact ultimately resulting in the surrender of all that were so long so endearing to both the parties are not at all wanting. They suggest the pointedness of irregular love which in exclusion of other considerations inevitably leads to irresistible union between the two lovers.

Jīva has exploited this abnormal psychosis developed in amorous perplexity to throw light on the nature of ideal love for Kṛṣṇa. As a lover, Jīva would argue, over head and ears in love, relinquishes everything in favour of his beloved, in the same way one should love Kṛṣṇa, leaving everything behind. To bring this lesson home to every individual, Jīva would conclude, the *gopīs* have been painted as others' wives though in fact the *gopīs* were his own potencies and therefore his own wives. Thus while the *Nimbārka* School refused to entertain the allegation of Kṛṣṇa's so-called immorality and the *Vallabha* School took the biography of Kṛṣṇa away from the domain of history to the region of practical ethics, Jīva Gosvāmin was prepared to give a face value to the description of *gopīs* being others' wives. His attempt was reconciliation between the view already expressed by *Nimbārka* viz, that the *gopīs* were wives of Kṛṣṇa and the view that the *gopīs* were others' wives as evidenced by the description in the *Bhāgavata*. *Nimbārka* has confined the status of "wife" to Rādhā only at Vṛndāvana while the other *gopīs* were to him mere maidservants. Jīva recognised all the *gopīs*—Rādhā and others—to be his wives. He grafted the theory of *gopīs* being others' wives on this bedrock of *gopīs* being the legal wives of Kṛṣṇa. He tried to avoid the contra-

diction emerging from this grafting by reading a deep-seated motive behind this description. The motive was, as he feels, to preach practical ethics to the ordinary mortals. The ethics consists in loving Kṛṣṇa in a relentless way that does not allow the interference of any other considerations. It was taking refuge in Kṛṣṇa, surrendering everything else. This is in substance the "secret of secrets" divulged to Arjuna by *Bhagavān* in the *Gītā*: "Take shelter in me leaving all. I shall liberate you from all sins. Do not worry".⁷⁴

Although the *Nimbārka* and *Vallabha* Schools have made fruitful contributions to practical ethics in their attitude towards the whole problem yet they may appear to have evaded the real problem—one by flat refusal to admit it and the other by taking refuge in symbolism. Jīva desired to countenance it. But basically his attitude may be said to be a refinement of Nimbārka's. His explanation viz, reading a profound motive in the description of *gopīs* being others' wives exhibits his ingenuity inspired by a deep religious fervour. But when we consider the fact that the allegation was launched against the person whom we call the historical Kṛṣṇa and that the said uncomfortable description should not merely be blasted away with the dynamite of a motive attributed to such description, Jīva also may not be considered to have faced the problem quite squarely.

Jīva, however, took pains to establish his theory that the *gopīs* were in fact the wives of Kṛṣṇa. He draws upon the *Gautamī-Tantra* which holds that "Kṛṣṇa, the delight of the universe, was the legal husband of the *gopīs* from birth to birth". He also quotes from the *Gopāla-tāpanī* which declares: "Kṛṣṇa is the husband of yours". The *Bhāgavata* also addresses the *gopīs* as the "wives of Kṛṣṇa" (*kṛṣṇa-vadhvāḥ*). So in face of such authorities including the *Bhāgavata*, the *gopīs* ought to be taken as the legal wives of Kṛṣṇa. This is the claim of Jīva Gosvāmin.

Viśvanātha Cakravartin who represents another section of the Bengal School of *Vaiṣṇavism* (and in fact feelings are so strong on the problem that Viśvanātha is regarded to be a

⁷⁴ *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja.
ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi ma śucaḥ*. . . *Gītā* 18.66.

free-thinker mainly because of his view on this point) has faced the problem more realistically. He agrees with Jīva that the unmanifest sport of the eternal Kṛṣṇa is with his own potencies and that eliminates the question of immorality with regard to the eternal Kṛṣṇa. But so far as the allegation against the historical Kṛṣṇa is concerned it must be regarded as a real one. So in all fairness to the problem one should realise the gravity of it and thus propose an answer that does adequate justice to the passages of the *Bhāgavata* which undeniably describe the irregularity of Kṛṣṇa's association with the *gopīs*.

For instance, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa himself refers to their husbands and brothers: "Your brothers and husbands".⁷⁵ In fact, Uddhava lays great premium on the love of the *gopīs* exclusively because it was an unusual direction that drowns all social and moral considerations. This is what he says: "May I be born an humble shrub in some neglected corner at Vṛndāvana, which is blessed with the dust from the feet of the *gopīs*. They are the persons who by relinquishing the unshakable path of social and moral life have adopted the path of Kṛṣṇa that is persistently searched for by the hermits".⁷⁶ Can one just afford to ignore such unambiguous passages that unmistakably bear out the proposition that the *gopīs* were others' wives with whom Kṛṣṇa had forged a questionable association? It is no good to underestimate this situation.

So the answer should take another direction. In fact the *Bhāgavata* itself has tried to meet this point, remarks Viśvanātha. The *Bhāgavata* exonerates Kṛṣṇa from blemishes in view of the fact that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme Lord of the universe and therefore he has no egoity (*ahamkāra*) to which is traced the notions of good or bad. Thus Kṛṣṇa being the transcendental Reality the empirical notions of right and wrong that are usually confined to the ordinary mortals have no bearing

⁷⁵ *mātaraḥ pītaraḥ putrā bhrātaraḥ patayaś ca vaḥ*. 10.29.20 ab.

⁷⁶ *āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhinām.
yā dustyajam sva-janam ārya-patham ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padaviṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām*.. 10.47.61.

on him.⁷⁷ On the contrary his associations with the *gopīs* are extolled in the *Bhāgavata*. The *Bhāgavata* declares that "the statements which embody at every step the sanctifying names of Hari embellished with his remarkable deeds fulfil the need for human utterance. That is why the saints give an audience to, sing and praise the names of Hari".⁷⁸ Had the association with *gopīs* been looked upon as a social stigma, surely the *Bhāgavata* would not have come forward to make such curious statements.

In fact, the state of the *gopīs* being others' wives is a creation of *Māyā*. Still this state is not illusory as held out by Jīva Gosvāmin. The position is this: *Māyā* is of two kinds—one the binding principle (*Avidyā*) and the other (*Vidyā*) providing for Divine Sports. As *Avidyā*, *Māyā* provides for the empirical existence which is the basis of social and moral laws. On the other hand, as the principle of Divine Sports (*Vidyā*), *Māyā* creates spiritual existence. While the mortal husbands of the *gopīs* were under the purview of *Avidyā*, Kṛṣṇa came within the range of *Māyā* making for Divine Sports. In other words, the *gopīs* had two kinds of husbands. While ordinary mortals were conventional husbands, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa was their spiritual husband. A meeting with the spiritual husband cannot be subjected to moral criticism for morality is to be understood only in the context of the empirical world to which belong their conventional husbands.⁷⁹

In terms of the *Bhāgavata* philosophy the concept of Viśvanātha Cakravartin's "*Māyā*" incorporates *Yoga-māyā*, the principle of Divine Sport, and *Avidyā*, the principle of bondage. So while Viśvanātha recognises Kṛṣṇa as the spiritual husband he practically refers to the association of the *gopīs* with the eternal Kṛṣṇa. His agreement to the proposal that the *gopīs* were

⁷⁷ *kūṣalā'caritenaijām iha svārtho na vidyate.
viparyayaṇa vā'nartha nir-ahamkāriṇām prabho..
kim uta'khila-sattvānām tiryak-martya-divaukasām.
iṣṭiś cehitavyānām kūṣalā'kūṣalā'noyayaḥ.. 10.33.32-33.*

⁷⁸ *tad-vāg-visargo janatā'gha-viplavo
yasmin prati-slokaṁ a-baddhavatyapi.
nāmānyanantasya yośo'ṅkitāni yat
śṛṇvanti gāyanti gṛṇanti sādhaṇaḥ.. 1.5.11.*

⁷⁹ Commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmin and Viśvanātha Cakravartin on the *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi* of Rūpa Gosvāmin, pp. 10-30.

others' wives as evinced by the passages of the *Bhāgavata* indicates his realism. But the juxtaposition of two types of husbands to meet the criticism does not exactly solve the problem. The problem was: Why should the historical Kṛṣṇa (i.e., the Kṛṣṇa Descent) behave in such way with the *gopīs* who are described to be others' wives as to rouse the question of immoral conduct on the part of Kṛṣṇa? The concept of Kṛṣṇa being their spiritual husband does not give him the license to exhibit amorous behaviour which stinks at the nose of ordinary beings. After all, people are prone to imitate the character of the great and if Kṛṣṇa had come down upon the world to set a standard of right behaviour his personal life does not seem to warrant it.

A REVIEW OF THE WHOLE PROBLEM

In view of the serious nature of the problem arising out of Kṛṣṇa's association with the *gopīs* one may venture to suggest further consideration of the real issue. In fact the entire Kṛṣṇa-philosophy—both its ethics and metaphysics—is hinged upon a satisfactory answer to the problem under consideration. So, if the Kṛṣṇa-cult is to flourish as glorious as ever it is worthwhile to devote some more space to this vexatious question.

The great devotee Uddhava brings out the uniqueness of the association of Kṛṣṇa in the following way: "After all, the cowherd women were rural. But still they were entitled to possess divine love (*rūḍha-bhāva*) for Kṛṣṇa. This was none to their credit. This was the majesty of the association with Kṛṣṇa which leads to the highest good as a good medicine shows its efficacy, irrespective of the attitude of the patient towards it".⁸⁰ In this context Uddhava uses the epithet "*vyabhicāra-duṣṭāḥ*" (which means "subjected to adultery") applied to the cowherd women. So his statement suggests two things: (1) the cowherd women were undoubtedly others' wives and therefore in the eye of the society they committed a moral offence in their association with Kṛṣṇa and (2) still the very association with Kṛṣṇa who was the perfect manifestation of *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, crystallized their human love into divine.

⁸⁰ *kveṃāḥ striyo vana-carir vyabhicāra-duṣṭāḥ*
kṛṣṇe kva caiṣa paramātmāni rūḍha-bhāvāḥ.
nanvīśvaro'nubhajato'viduṣo'pi sāksāc
chreyas tanotyagada-rāja ivopayuktaḥ.. 10.47.59.

Now an offence of this kind entails misconduct on both the partners. In the present case Kṛṣṇa is liable to be charged with it as are the cowherd women. It is now being proposed to review the behaviour of Kṛṣṇa in his contact with the cowherd women.

Presuming that Kṛṣṇa participated in what may appear to be amorous, it is still remarkable to observe that Kṛṣṇa proved himself to have had perfect control over himself during his association with the *gopīs*.⁸¹ Śrīdhara also emphasizes this point⁸² that the extraordinary control over animal instinct indicates the triumph of Kṛṣṇa over sex. This self-mortification finds a parallel in the spiritual method of the *Tāntrikas* who have the tradition of undergoing this most difficult process of conquering the sex in face of the most tempting situation. It is also possible to imagine in this context that the behaviour of Kṛṣṇa towards the *gopīs* may be looked upon from the standpoint of the *Tāntrikas*. The difference between the cult of the *Tāntrikas* and that advocated by the *Vaiṣṇavas* lies however in the fact that the *Bhāgavata* allowed its actual practice only in the case of Kṛṣṇa who is believed to be the perfect manifestation of *Bhagavān*. But the *Bhāgavata* has categorically prohibited its practice by ordinary mortals: "By no means should a person practise such religion, who is not a master of his senses. If anybody takes to this out of other motive or even out of mistake he is bound to be ruined as one other than the lord Śiva dies of poison. The preaching of the wise is true but their conduct scarcely befits the ordinary mortals. So an intelligent person should practise only what he is advised to".⁸³ If we realise the original position thus stated by the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* any doctrine that preaches the imitation of the conduct of Kṛṣṇa can legitimately be considered to an aberration of the real "*Bhāgavata-dharma*".

In view of Kṛṣṇa's complete mastery over sex the *Bhāgavata* therefore describes him as "the destroyer of Cupid".⁸⁴

⁸¹ *sa satya-kāmo'nuratā'balā-gaṇaḥ
sīveva ātmanyavaruddha-saurataḥ*.. 10.33.25 bc.

⁸² *Vide Śrīdhara on 10.33.25.*

⁸³ *naitat samācrej jātu manasā'pi hyanīśvaraḥ.
vināśyatyācaran mauḍhyād yathā'rudro'bdhi-jaṁ viṣam..
īśvarāṇāṁ vacaḥ satyaṁ tathivā'caritaṁ kvacit.
teṣāṁ yat sva-paco yuktaṁ buddhimāns tat samācaret*.. 10.33.30-31.

⁸⁴ *sākṣān manmatha-manmathaḥ* 10.32.2d.

And this mastery over sex is a permanent feature with him throughout his life. Had sex had any influence upon Kṛṣṇa we might have observed him behaving otherwise at least with his legal wives. But this is what the *Bhāgavata* has to state about it: "Despite all sorts of gestures and graceful dalliances the wives of Kṛṣṇa could not overpower him. They tried their best but were a complete failure. They were sixteen thousand in number".⁸⁵ So the explanation that Kṛṣṇa's restraint in his contact with the cowherd women was a taboo against sex, limited only to others' wives, is an oversimplification. In fact, his lordship over sex was a part of his innate nature and not a mere taboo against some specific members of the opposite sex.

As Kṛṣṇa could not be involved in ordinary behaviour so Parīkṣit also wondered as to the purpose for which Kṛṣṇa took to such activities. Had Parīkṣit taken the behaviour of Kṛṣṇa at its face value he would not have troubled himself to hunt for a reason for this behaviour on the part of Kṛṣṇa.

In fact, one should be surprised to observe that in actual dalliances with the cowherd women⁸⁶ Kṛṣṇa is described to be a neutral participator. He was just submitting himself to the wishes of the *gopīs*, never to grow impatient and never taking initiative in any of these activities. The whole show was in fact a fulfilment of his promise to play with the cowherd women. It was an endeavour to please them but he himself had no axe to grind.⁸⁷

It was in consonance with this mastery over sex that he disappeared from the midst of cowherd women when he noticed that they have grown proud of his company.⁸⁸ Certainly the infusion of holy humility into the pastimes forms no part of ordinary sexual behaviour.

A closer scrutiny of the opening verse of "*rāsa-līlā*" will

⁸⁵ *carvabja-kośa-vadanā'yata-bāhu-netra-sa-prema-hāsa-rasa-vikṣita-valgu-jalpaiḥ. sammohitā bhagavato na mano vijetum svair vibhraiḥ sam-asakan vanitā vibhūmnaḥ.. patnyas tu śoḍaśa-sahasram anaṅga-bāṇir yasyendriyaṁ vimathitum karaṇair na lekuḥ..* 10.61.3, 4ab.

⁸⁶ *tatrā'rabhata govindo rāsa-kriḍām anu-vrataiḥ..* 10.33.2a.

⁸⁷ *ātmā'rāmo'pyarīramat* 10.29.42d.

⁸⁸ *tāsāṁ tat saubhaga-madam vikṣya mānaṁ ca keśavaḥ. prasamāya prasādāya tatrivā'ntar-adhiyata..* 10.29.48.

throw more light on the nature of activities undertaken by Kṛṣṇa in the company of the cowherd women. The opening verse reads thus:—

*bhagavān api tā rātriḥ śaradotphulla-mallikāḥ
vīkṣya rantum manaś cakre yogamāyām upāśritāḥ*⁸⁹..

“Having noticed the arrival of those promised nights of the autumn, perfumed by different sweet-smelling flowers, *Bhagavān* intended to play with the cowherd women with the aid of *Yoga-māyā*”. Before the dalliances commence the *Bhāgavata* thus charges the atmosphere with *Yoga-māyā*, the principle of Divine Sports. Further, Kṛṣṇa is described here in terms of *Bhagavān*. So *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, undertook to commence these Sports with the aid of *Yoga-māyā* when he observed that the time was ripe for such plays. Though being *Bhagavān* he was perpetually settled in self-satiety yet he intended to satisfy the desire of the cowherd women who had been wistly longing for his company for a long time. This is indicated by “*api*” (although) in the verse under consideration. Further, as *Yoga-māyā* is the principle of Divine Sports unveiled in unmitigated spirituality, such activity on the part of *Bhagavān* transcends all criticism which is confined to the empirical world of ordinary mortals labouring under the influence of *Māyā*, the principle of bondage.

The consideration of the connotation of the word “*rāsa*” is also relevant in this context. It is the ordinary principle of interpretation that the primary meaning of a word should be ascertained, if possible, by its usage in another context in the same work. Fortunately the word “*rāsa*” has actually been used in another verse:—

*yat-sevayā bhagavataḥ kūṭasthasya madhu-dviṣaḥ
rati-rāso bhavet tīvro pādayor vyasanā'rdanaḥ*⁹⁰..

“By resorting to such ethical things the ovation of devotion to the feet of Kṛṣṇa flourishes”. Śrīdhara interprets the word

⁸⁹ 10.29.1.

⁹⁰ 3.7.19.

"*rāsa*" in this context to mean "ovation". And, unless repugnant to the context, the same meaning should be applicable to the occasion of "*rāsa-līlā*". In other words, "*rāsa-līlā*" is a divine fiesta brought into existence by the sweet will of the Absolute.

One may apparently object to the word "*rantum*" used in the opening verse under consideration. The word is associated with sex. It literally means "in order to satisfy sex". But, if we apply the same principle of interpretation as has been suggested in the case of "*rāsa*", we come upon the conclusion that the word "*rantum*" also does not imply sex but mere play. The *Bhāgavata* describes the sports of Kṛṣṇa in the company of his boy friends in the following vein:—

tan mañju-ghoṣāli-mṛga-dvijā'kulam
mahan-manaḥ-prakhya-payaḥ sarasvatā
vātena juṣṭam śata-patra-gandhinā
*nirīkṣya rantum bhagavān mano dadhe*⁹¹

"Having noticed the forest resonant with humming bees and chirping birds and the wind laden with the fragrance of lotuses, *Bhagavān* desired to play". It is significant to note that the same word "*rantum*" has been used in this context as well. Now, the context unmistakably makes it clear that the word "*rantum*" cannot have any other connotation than sheer play. Why should it be considered to have a separate connotation when used in the context of "*rāsa-līlā*"? Moreover, the diction here closely corresponds to that of "*rāsa-līlā*". For example the verse reads:

'*nirīkṣya rantum bhagavān mano dadhe*'.
 And in "*rāsa*" it reads:

bhagavān api
vīkṣya rantum manas cakre.

This close parallelism of diction suggests close correspondence of thoughts. And if in one case the sentence describes mere

sport there is no reason why in the other it should mean something else.

It is also interesting to observe the same way of concluding the description. Thus Kṛṣṇa's sports have been concluded in the following vein:—

*evam nigūḍhātmamatiḥ sva-māyayā
gopātma-jatvaṁ caritair viḍambayan.
reme ramā-lālita-pāda-pallavo
grāmyaiḥ samam grāmyavad īśa-ceṣṭitaḥ*⁹²..

“In this way the Absolute *played* with the rural boys like an ordinary mortal, by concealing his majesty”.

The sports of the *gopīs* conclude also in a similar manner:—

*evam pariṣvaṅga-varā'bhimarśa-
snigdhe-kṣṇoddāma-vilāsa-hāsaiḥ
reme rameśo vraja-sundarībhiḥ
yathā'rbhakaḥ sva-pratibimba-vibhramaḥ*⁹³..

“In this way the Absolute *played* with the cowherd women as a child plays with his shadows”. Here the word “*reme*” deserves also some consideration. In another context the *Bhāgavata* describes that he was pleased by pleasing others (*ramayan reme*).⁹⁴ All this brings home the fact that Kṛṣṇa indulged in mere sports with the cowherd women just to satisfy their heart's desire in an atmosphere of spirituality away from the conventional pattern of unwarranted love.

Now that Kṛṣṇa has been exonerated from the allegation of immorality, it remains to see the position of the cowherd women, the other party to the alleged crime. It would do no harm to recognise at the very outset that the women were attracted to Kṛṣṇa out of their animal instinct which finally sublimated into a divine sentiment.⁹⁵ Though the centre of

⁹² 10.15.19.

⁹³ 10.33.16.

⁹⁴ 3.3.21.

⁹⁵ “*Mahā-bhāva*” — *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi* p. 462 ; *rūḍha-bhāva* — *Bhāgavata* 10.47.59.

attraction was Kṛṣṇa's beauty⁹⁶ yet the association of Kṛṣṇa who was the perfect manifestation of *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, crystallized their basic instinct into selfless love. This is a glorious instance as to the ennobling nature of association with the good (*sat-saṁga*).

That the cowherd women are actuated by sex at the first instance is borne out by the *Bhāgavata* which describes about a few unlucky women who were restrained from meeting Kṛṣṇa when he had sent a call through his lute. The *Bhāgavata* states: "Though they had forged an association with Kṛṣṇa, knowing him to be an excellent lover (*jāra*) yet they left their material bodies with the immediate destruction of their bondage".⁹⁷ This of course evokes the query of Parīkṣit: "The cowherd women knew him merely as a lovable young man (*kānta*). But they never realised him to be the manifestation of Reality (*Brahman*). How could such women who are thus steeped in materiality escape the shackles of *guṇa*-reals?"⁹⁸ Certainly the question and the ground which gave rise to this suggest that the cowherd women began with sex.

The answer of Śuka to the question of Parīkṣit bears this out more clearly. Śuka declares: Sex, anger, fear, affection, blood relationship or friendship—in fact any feeling directed incessantly to Hari—brings about concentration on Him".⁹⁹ The *Bhāgavata* has cited stock examples to substantiate this statement in another context. "Persons have ultimately merged into Kṛṣṇa by sex like the *gopīs*, by anger like Śiṣupāla etc., by fear like Kāṁsa, by affection like Yudhiṣṭhira etc., by blood relationship like the Vṛṣṇis (in whose family Kṛṣṇa had descended) or by natural devotion like Nārada etc."¹⁰⁰ This latter statement

⁹⁶ *vikṣyā' lakā'vṛta-mukhaṁ tava kuṇḍala-śrī-gaṇḍa-sthalā'dhara-sudhaṁ hasitā'valokam. dattā'bhayaṁ ca bhuja-daṇḍa-yugaṁ vilokya vakṣaḥ śrīyaika-ramaṇaṁ ca bhavāma dāsyāḥ..* 10.29.39.

⁹⁷ *taṁ eva paramātmānaṁ jāra-buddhya'pi saṁgatāḥ. jahur guṇa-mayaṁ dehaṁ sadyaḥ prakṣiṇa-bandhanāḥ..* 10.29.11.

⁹⁸ *kṛṣṇaṁ viduḥ paraṁ kāntaṁ na tu brahmatayā mune. guṇa-pravāho paramas tāsāṁ guṇa-dhiyāṁ katham..* 10.29.12.

⁹⁹ *kāmaṁ krodhaṁ bhayaṁ snehaṁ aikyaṁ sauhṛdam eva ca. nityaṁ harau vidadhato yānti tanmayatām hi te..* 10.29.15.

¹⁰⁰ *gopyaḥ kāmād bhayāt kaṁso dveṣāc caidyā'dayo nṛpāḥ. sambandhād vṛṣṇayaḥ snehād yūyaṁ bhaktyā vayaṁ vibho..* 7.1.30.

of the *Bhāgavata* makes it abundantly clear that the *gopīs* had approached Kṛṣṇa with sex.

In fact, the *Bhāgavata* lays emphasis on the concentration on the Divine and it therefore entertains any feeling which eventually leads to this goal. The *Bhāgavata* explains the whole psychology in the following way: As a type of insect which gets into the clutches of the wasp (*peśaskṛt*) eventually transforms itself into a wasp by intense contemplation of its enemy so the intense contemplation of Hari transforms the nature of the contemplator. Contemplation purifies the mind. A purified mind is possessed by Hari. This possession (*āveśa*) secures final beatitude.¹⁰¹ So the *Bhāgavata* recommends the centring of the mind on Kṛṣṇa by any means.¹⁰²

In the context of concealing the clothes of the *gopīs* (*vastra-haraṇa-līlā*) *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa reveals the excellence of erotic feelings placed on him in the following way:—"Erotic feelings of those whose minds are offered to me do not grow into the satisfaction of animal instinct. A fried seed does not grow into a plant."¹⁰³ So the conclusion is inevitable that the *gopīs* started with sex. Still they have no reason to be ashamed of; for, this love was placed on the Absolute.

In fact the difference between the animal instinct and divine love is not of kind but of degree. This is borne out both by the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata*. The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* records the prayer of Prahlāda, one of the finest devotees, in the following strain:—"Let that unabated love which an ordinary mortal feels for material objects never leave my contemplating mind."¹⁰⁴ In other words, the love for a material object and love for God are *one* in substance. The difference lies in the content of love, which, in one case, is the evanescent

¹⁰¹ *kīṣaḥ peśaskṛtā ruddhaḥ kuḍyāpām tam anusmaran. samrambha-bhaya-yogena vindate tat-svarūpatām. . evaṁ kṛṣṇe bhagavati māyā-manuja īhvare. vaireṇa pūta-pāpmānas taṁ āpur anu-cintayā. . kāmād dveṣād bhayāt snehāt yathā bhakyeśvare manaḥ. āveśya tad aghaṁ hitvā bahavas tad-gatiṁ gatāḥ. .* 7.1.27-29.

¹⁰² *katamo'pi na veṇaḥ syāt pañcānām puruṣaṁ prati. tasmāt kenā'pyupāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet. .* 7.1.31.

¹⁰³ *na mayyāveśita-dhiyām kāmāḥ kāmāya kalpate. bharjñitā kvathitā dhānā prāyo bijāya neṣyate. .* 10.22.26.

¹⁰⁴ *yā prītir a-vivekānām viṣayeṣvanapāyini. tvām anu-smarataḥ sū me hṛdayān nā'pasarpatu. .* VP 1.20.29.

object, and God in the other. The *Bhāgavata* voices the same note when it says "Attachments act as thieves, the house acts as the prison cell, and delusion serves as fetters until one is initiated to the divine presence of Kṛṣṇa".¹⁰⁵

So it may be concluded on the basis of the *Bhāgavata* that the *Bhāgavata* does not look down upon our animal instinct as something loathsome. To the *Bhāgavata* an instinct is neutral—neither good nor bad. It becomes so according to the use we put it to. Attributed to God it puts forth the highest result whereas exercised for the sake of material satisfaction it revets the chain of bondage. Of the feelings, again, the *Bhāgavata* considers love to be the best. And, in view of the instinct of sex being the most primordial in man, emphasis on sex discloses a deep insight on the part of the *Bhāgavata* into the constitution of human mind.

It should now be interesting to trace the evolution of divine sentiment in the cowherd women. The following is an attempt to show the stages through which the sex of them was rarified into divine love:—

The lute of Kṛṣṇa played a vital part in establishing the relationship of the *gopīs* with Kṛṣṇa, which eventually culminated in the most profound unity between the cowherd women on the one hand and Kṛṣṇa on the other. And, if we remember the metaphysical principle for which the lute of Kṛṣṇa stands it becomes understandable why the lute played such a vital role in bringing about such unification. The lute stands for the attractive power of Kṛṣṇa, as suggested before. It is a part of his Divine Sport that he unfolds himself into diversity involving the plurality of individual souls. But it is a part of the same Sport that he calls the souls back to his own self. From time immemorial the entire creation has been saturated with the resonance of divine music. It is said that the lute calls by the name of Śrī-Rādhā. In fact, the lute can have no other name to call for. The concept of Śrī-Rādhā stands for the individual souls. This is brought about by the fact that the *Bhāgavata* does nowhere explicitly mention the name of Śrī-

¹⁰⁵ *tāvad rāgā'dayas stenās tāvat kārā-grhaṁ grham.
tāvan moho'ñghri-nigaḍo yāvat kṛṣṇa na te janāḥ...* 10.14.36.

Rādhā. The only verse that has been construed to imply Śrī-Rādhā is:—

*anayā'rādhito nūnam bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ
yan no vihāya govindah pṛito yām anayad rahaḥ.*¹⁰⁰

"She indeed has worshipped Kṛṣṇa. For, leaving us all Govinda being pleased with her has allowed her to enjoy his company in solitude". The *Bhāgavata* has mentioned her as just a cowherd girl (*gopī*). The *Vaiṣṇava* Schools have tried to explain the phrase "*anayā'rādhitaḥ*" to mean "Kṛṣṇa is endowed with Rādhā in the shape of this *gopī*." But in view of the vow which the *gopīs* had undertaken to please Kātyāyanī for the sake of obtaining Kṛṣṇa as their husband, the literal meaning of this phrase seems to be—"She indeed has worshipped Kṛṣṇa". In fact "*Rādhā*" literally means a worshipper and one might therefore imagine that a worshipper became *Śrī-Rādhā* by the quality of her worship. A worshipper is usually conceived in terms of feminine because Kṛṣṇa is the husband (*īśvara*) of all. Now, as one worshipper was given the status of *Śrī-Rādhā* at the hand of the *Vaiṣṇava* Schools, it may be presumed that the status of *Śrī-Rādhā* is obtainable by other worshippers as well. In other words, all the individual souls are potentially Rādhā. They are worshippers (*ā-rādhikā*) as long as they do not attain the full stature of *Rādhā-hood*. Their success in worship makes them *Rādhikā*. So the lute of Kṛṣṇa cannot but call by the name of Rādhā only.

The lute has been sending its standing message to the individual souls—the clarion call to be re-united with the perpetual bliss of the Absolute. Though the call is for all the souls yet only a few can lend their ears to it. It requires a refined and trained ear to listen to that call. It is now necessary to feature the broad outlines of the *Bhāgavata-dharma* exemplified through the life of the cowherd women. The *Bhāgavata-dharma* falls into three well-marked hierarchical stages:—(1) The surrender of action unto God (2) the ninefold devotion viz, listening, chanting, remembrance, service, worship, prayer, servitude, friendship and self-surrender and (3) divine love. The *Bhāgavata* has suggested an alternative to the first stage, the

surrender of action unto God. And that alternative is association with the good (*sat-saṁga*).¹⁰⁷ In the case of the cowherd women it was the association with *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa, the third grade of Reality. So they earned an exemption from practising the first stage of the *Bhāgavata-dharma*. In other words, the *gopīs* begin with listening, the first stratum of the second stage.

So the lute begins its business. It implants sex in the mind of the *gopīs*; it develops that to a point when the desire to have Kṛṣṇa is kindled into an impetuous love. It is the lute which leads this love to a calm and selfless divine sentiment and subsequently unites Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* in an indissoluble tie. The role of the lute is then fully realised by the *gopīs* as is evident from the eulogy by the *gopīs* about the lute after they were blessed with the embrace of Kṛṣṇa at "*rāsa-līlā*".¹⁰⁸ The activity of the lute further suggests that the best way of obtaining his union is submitting oneself to the divine will. The Absolute takes the initiative because of its inherent urge to realise its own nature—its native ecstasy. So the credit of the cowherd women to possess the rare love was in fact the credit of Kṛṣṇa who took the initiative and who always does the same.

So, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa played on his lute. "In the midst of other cowherd boys he drove the cattle to the forest with a mind to play and engrossed in playing upon the lute".¹⁰⁹ When he would return home in the evening twilight he would always be playing upon his lute. He looked wonderful in wild flowers stuck to the peacock feather held fast by the lump of his hair turned ruddy with the dust of the cattle. His cowherd friends were singing in his praise. And the cowherd girls assembled in groups with a *desire* to see him".¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *salām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛi-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ.
taj-joṣaṇād āsvapavarga-vartmani
śradhdhā ratir bhaktir anu-kramiṣyati..* 3.25.25.

¹⁰⁸ 10.35.

¹⁰⁹ *tan mādhave veṇum udirayan vṛto
gopair grṇadbhiḥ sva-yaśo balā'nvitāḥ.
paśūn puraskṛtya paśavyam āviśad
vihartukāmaḥ kusumā'karam vanam..* 10.15.2.

¹¹⁰ *taṁ go-rajā-cchurita-kuntala-baddha-barha-
vanya-prasūna-rucirekṣaṇa-cāru-hāsam.
veṇum kvaṇantam an-gair anu-gīta-kīrtiṁ
gopyo didṛkṣitā-dṛṣṭo'bhyaḡaman sametāḥ..* 10.15.42.

So day in and day out the cowherd girls listened to the lute of Kṛṣṇa. And it was no wonder that their instinct of love, so long unconsciously brewing in their minds, gradually took a tangible shape as a *desire* to see him. But Kṛṣṇa continued his game. He continued to graze the cattle in the company of the cowherd boys and his lute was always active. At the sound of the lute which eventually pronounced their instinct of love (*smarodayam*) they felt the urge of discussing Kṛṣṇa in his absence.¹¹¹

It may be noticed from the above description how the instinct of love was slowly but steadily undergoing evolution. Originally it was unconscious. But being constantly tempered by the sound of the lute the instinct was developed enough to be at the threshold of consciousness and began to be felt as a desire to see Kṛṣṇa. Its presence was unmistakably felt when it was strong enough to create an emotional tension in their minds, asking for release. This was done in the shape of the chanting of his activities among the cowherd girls. Seen from the standpoint of spiritual advancement the development of love has been brought by *listening* to Kṛṣṇa's lute and by mutual *discussion* about Kṛṣṇa—the first two strata of the ninefold devotion referred to above as the second stage of the *Bhāgavata-dharma*. But still such love was growing in concealment. That is why the cowherd girls in their shyness described Kṛṣṇa when he was gone. They were plunged in pleasure in doing so.¹¹²

The constant chanting of Kṛṣṇa led the cowherd girls to *remembrance* which culminates in undisturbed concentration. Thus the *Bhāgavata* describes that by constant description of Kṛṣṇa the dwellers of Vṛndāvana became absorbed in him.¹¹³

Next comes the vow of Kātyāyanī. At this stage their love

¹¹¹ *kusumita-vana-rāji-susmi-bhṛṅga-
dviija-kula-ghuṣṭa-saraḥ-sarin-mahidhram.
madhupatir avagāhya cārayan gāḥ
sa-paṣu-pāla-balas cukūja veṇuṃ.. 10.21.2.
tad vraja-sriya āsrutya veṇu-gītām smarodayam.
kālcit parokṣaṁ kṛṣṇasya sva-sakhibhyo'nvavarṇayan.. 10.21.3.*

¹¹² *iti veṇu-ravaṁ rājan sarva-bhūta-mano-haram.
śrutvā vraja-striyaḥ sarvā varṇayantyo'bhirebhire.. 10.21.6.*

¹¹³ *evaṁ-vidhā bhagavato yā vṛndāvana-cāriṇaḥ.
varṇayantyo mitho goṇyaḥ kṛdās tanmayatām yayuh.. 10.21.20.*

for Kṛṣṇa took the definite shape of asking Kātyāyanī to offer Kṛṣṇa as their husband.¹¹⁴ And this desire was fulfilled as the *Bhāgavata* in the context of “*rāsā-līlā*” addressed the cowherd women as the “wives of Kṛṣṇa” (*kṛṣṇa-vadhvāḥ*). Yet from the conventional point of view they were married to other persons. This is evident from the fact that when at the clarion call of Kṛṣṇa the cowherd women had left the bed-sides of their respective husbands, they still felt, under the illusion of Kṛṣṇa, as if their respective wives were with them and thus they did not grudge Kṛṣṇa for taking away their wives.¹¹⁵

But if the cowherd women were married to other persons how could they be regarded as the wives of Kṛṣṇa? Certainly therefore the connection of Kṛṣṇa with the cowherd girls was other than conventional. This is brought out in another context in the *Bhāgavata*. When at the sound of his lute the cowherd women had assembled round Kṛṣṇa, he dissuaded them from coming to him, with a view to ascertaining the quality of their love. Surely this is not a conventional behaviour as one might expect in ordinary love. Subsequently Kṛṣṇa agreed to play with them when they refused to return. At this the cowherd women felt elated. But self-elation, however noble may be the cause of it, is incompatible with the presence of the Absolute and therefore Kṛṣṇa disappeared at once.¹¹⁶ A love which requires complete self-effacement cannot be included in the conventional category. Moreover, the cowherd girls did not attain the stage of puberty when they craved for Kṛṣṇa as their husband.¹¹⁷ So, the *Bhāgavata* calls them little girls (*kumārikāḥ*).¹¹⁸ How can such girls be motivated by the desire which finds its fulfilment in marriage in its ordinary sense? Hence the prayer of the cowherd girls to win Kṛṣṇa as their husband was not inspired by the animal instinct of sex but by innate love

¹¹⁴ *kātyāyanī mahā-māye mahā-yoginyadhīsvari.
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ..* 10.22.4.

¹¹⁵ *nā'sūyan khalu kṛṣṇāya mohitās tasya māyayā.
manyamānāḥ sva-pārśva-sthān svān svān dārān vrajaukaśaḥ..* 10.33.37.

¹¹⁶ *evam bhagavataḥ kṛṣṇāḥ labdha-mānā mahātmanah.
ātmanāṁ menire strīṇāṁ māninyo'bhyadhikāṁ bhuvī..
tāsāṁ tat saubhaga-madam vikṛya mānāṁ ca keśavaḥ.
prasāmāya prasādāya tattraivāntar-adhīyata..* 10.29.47-48.

¹¹⁷ *bhagavān ā-hatā vikṛya buddha-bhāva-prasāditah.* 10.22.18.

¹¹⁸ *nanda-vraja-kumārikāḥ* 10.22.1b.

steadily undergoing crystallization. Such love culminated in having Kṛṣṇa as their husband—a husband available by pure love. In other words, Kṛṣṇa was the spiritual husband of the cowherd women though they were conventionally married to other persons.

The desire to see Kṛṣṇa, further pronounced as a desire to win him as their husband, came to its head at the sport of stealing away the clothes of the cowherd girls when they had descended into the Yamunā for a bath. The *Bhāgavata* describes how the Lord stripped the cowherd girls of all their restraints and traditional limitations: “The girls were befooled. Social taboos left them. They were subjected to ridicule. In fact, they were treated as puppets. Their clothes were stolen. Yet they did not grudge him for they were immersed in happiness in his company”.¹¹⁹ So long Kṛṣṇa was instigating their love only indirectly by playing upon his lute. But now noticing appreciable growth of their attachment he comes into the open to exhibit his initiative in rivetting the tie of love. The *gopīs* are now infatuated to the point of courting his servitude: “Please return our clothes, Oh lovable one, we shall do your bidding.”¹²⁰

Though submission to do Kṛṣṇa’s bidding was associated here with a threat to lodge a complaint to the king in case he refused to return their clothes, yet Kṛṣṇa was satisfied to see their pure feeling (*śuddha-bhāva*). He therefore placed their clothes on his shoulders and addressed them with a smile.¹²¹ One is reminded of a similar situation in the *Bhāgavad-gītā* where the Lord declares that he carries the burden of the devotee who chooses to depend on him.¹²² It is in consonance with this situation that Kṛṣṇa addressed the cowherd girls in the following terms:—“Oh girls, You have done your part of the job.

¹¹⁹ *dydham pralabdhās trapayā ca hāpitāḥ*
prastobhūtāḥ kṛīḍanavac ca kārītāḥ.
vastrāṇi caivāpāhṛtānyathā pyamum
tā nābhyasūyan priya-saṅga-nirvṛtāḥ.. 10.22.22.

¹²⁰ *śyāma-sundara te dāśya karavāma tavoditam.*
dehī vāsāṁsi dharma-jña no ced rājñe bruvāmahe.. 10.22.15.

¹²¹ *bhagavān ā-hatāḥ vikṣya śuddha-bhāva-prasāditāḥ.*
skandhe nidhāya vāsāṁsi prītaḥ provāca sa-smītaḥ.. 10.22.18.

¹²² *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate.*
teṣāṁ nityā bhijuktānām yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.. *Gītā* 9.22.

Do return now to your respective homes. I shall fulfil your heart's desire to enjoy my company, in due course".¹²³ Thus the love for Kṛṣṇa was initially an unconscious instinct. It then grew into a desire to see him. Thereafter it developed into the desire to win him as their husband and subsequently it crystallized into a pure feeling, untrammelled by ordinary considerations. In fact it was a feeling of humble submission to divine will. This stage is arrived at by a desire to servitude, the seventh stratum of the ninefold devotion. But actual servitude, friendship and self-surrender, the last three strata of ninefold devotion, are yet to follow.

The vow of Kātyāyanī was performed by the cowherd girls in the first month of the dewy season¹²⁴ and it continued for a month.¹²⁵ Within a few days hence, Kṛṣṇa had the occasion to conceal their clothes.¹²⁶ Thereafter nearly for a year Kṛṣṇa was engaged in various other sports like the lifting of the hill, Govardhana, to save Vṛndāvana from the devastating shower of Indra¹²⁷ and so on. During this period we cease to hear anything about the cowherd girls. Did their love terminate in the meantime or was it steadily gaining in strength by perpetual nourishment with the sonorous music of the lute? Several seasons rolled on. The rainy season made its appearance when the rivers were in high spate with muddy volumes of gushing water. This was followed by the autumn when tumultuous fury gave place to solemn and peaceful journey of the mature streams carrying the burden of crystal-clear water. Was the change in the deepening love for Kṛṣṇa similar to what was happening in Nature? Undoubtedly the *gopīs* were nurturing the burden of love, calm and peaceful, and, at the same time, substantial and crystal; for, when Kṛṣṇa was sure of it he in-

¹²³ *yātā'balā vrajaṁ siddhā mayemā raṁsyatha kṣapāḥ.* 10.22.27ab.

¹²⁴ *hemante prathame māsi nanda-vraja-kumārikāḥ.*
cerur haviṣyaṁ bhuñjānāḥ kātyāyanīcāna-vratam.. 10.22.1.

¹²⁵ *evaṁ māsaṁ vrataṁ ceruḥ kumāryaḥ kṛṣṇa-cetasāḥ* 10.22.5.

¹²⁶ *uṣasyutthāya gotraiḥ svair anyonyā'baddha-bāhavaḥ.*
kṛṣṇam uccair jagur yāntyaḥ kālindyaṁ snātum anvaham..
nadyāṁ kadācid āgātya tīre nikṣipyā pūrva-vat.
vāsāṁsi kṛṣṇaṁ gāyāntyo vijarhuḥ śalile mudā..
bhāgavāms tad abhipretya kṛṣṇo yogeśvareśvaraḥ.
vayasyair āvṛtas tatra gatas tat-karma-siddhaye.. 10.22.6-8.

¹²⁷ 10.25.

tended to indulge in playing with them in the moon-lit nights of the autumn.¹²⁸

As a preparation to "rāsa-līlā" which subsequently followed, Lord Kṛṣṇa, in his usual manner, blew his lute.¹²⁹ At this the cowherd girls did not merely exhibit the advent of love (*smarodaya*) but the lute inflamed their rigour of love (*anaṅga-vardhana*) so much so that they became possessed by Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-grhīta-mānasāḥ*).¹³⁰ The intensity of their love may be evinced from the fact that they left their hearth and home and ran wildly to meet Kṛṣṇa. They met him at the bank of the Yumunā, regardless of all dissuasions by their husbands and brothers.¹³¹

This last statement has posited a problem. In another context the *Bhāgavata* has stated that though their wives had left yet the respective husbands of the cowherd women did not grudge Kṛṣṇa for they falsely thought their wives to be present at their bed-sides. The *Bhāgavata* has also described the pitiable state of some unfortunate women whose respective husbands kept them confined at home by force. They just left their material body and attained Kṛṣṇa by means of deep contemplation.¹³² How to reconcile these mutually contradictory statements? The Bengal School of *Vaiṣṇavism* opines that there were some women who left their physical forms to meet Kṛṣṇa. There were however others who defied the orders of their husbands and went away to meet Kṛṣṇa. Yet their husbands did not mind because they were duped to consider the shadows of their wives as real ones.¹³³

¹²⁸ 10.29.1.

¹²⁹ *dr̥ṣṭvā kumud-vantam akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalam
ramā'nanā'bhaṁ nava-kuṅkumā'ruṇam.
vanaṁ ca tat komala-gobhir aṅjītaṁ
jagau kalaṁ vāma-dṛṣṭāṁ mano-haram..* 10.29.3.

¹³⁰ *nīṣamya gitāṁ tad anaṅga-vardhanam
uraja-striyaḥ kṛṣṇa-grhīta-mānasāḥ.
ājagmur anyo'nyam a-lakṣitodyamāḥ
sa yatra kānto java-lola-kuṇḍalāḥ..* 10.29.4.

¹³¹ *tā vāryamāṇāḥ patibhiḥ pīṭybhīr bhrātṛ-bandhubhiḥ.
govindā'pakṣtā'tmāno na nyavartanta mohitāḥ..* 10.29.8.

¹³² *duḥ-saha-preṣṭha-viraha-tiṛa-tāpa-dhutā'tubhāḥ.
dhyāna-prāptā'cyutā'sleṣa-nirvṛtyā kṣīṇa-maṅgalāḥ..
tam eva paramātmānam jāra-buddhya'pi saṁgatāḥ.
jahur guṇa-mayaṁ dehaṁ sadyaḥ pra-kṣīṇa-bandhāḥ..* 10.29.10-11.

¹³³ *nā'sūyan khalu kṛṣṇāya mohitās tasya māyayā.
manyamānāḥ sva-parīva-sthān svān svān dārān vrajaukasāḥ..* 10.33.37.

At the stealing of the clothes the cowherd girls were shorn of customary taboos. But now they have relinquished all they had for the sake of Kṛṣṇa.¹³⁴ It may be pointed out here that the empirical self consists in two things—"I" at the centre and "Mine" at the circumference. The cowherd women have now attained the stage of relinquishing "Mine". This is evident from the dialogue that follows.

When with a view to ascertaining the quality of their love for him, Kṛṣṇa dissuaded them from staying with him they said:

"True, one should be devoted to one's husband and children. But *Bhagavān*, the friend and the soul, stands for all of them. People love God because they love their own soul. So please do not disappoint us. Allow us to remain with you".¹³⁵

Recognition of *Bhagavān* as their dearest is the stratum of friendship in the ninefold devotion. Inflamed by this the cowherd women further confess:—"Our mind so long sunk in household is now robbed by you. Our hands no longer aspire after domestic duties. Our feet do not move an inch from your presence. How can we go and what for?"¹³⁶

So the cowherd women in the fervour of their love implore:—"Be pleased with us. We have resorted to your feet in the hope of serving you. The more we look at you the more it kindles in us attachment for you. Oh best of men, offer us your servitude".¹³⁷ This humble prayer for *servitude* is its actual attainment. Thus the cowherd women are now entitled to possess *servitude*, another stratum of ninefold devotion.

¹³⁴ tad-artha-vinivartita-sarva-kāmāḥ 10.29.30b.

¹³⁵ yat patyapatya-suhṛdām anuvṛttir aṅga
striṇām sva-dharma itī dharmā-vidā tvayoktam.
astvevam etad upadeśa-pāde tvayīṣe
preṣṭho bhavāṁs tanu-bhṛtām kila bandhur ātmā..
kurvanti hi tvayi ratim kuśalāḥ sva ātman
nīlya-priye pati-sutā'dibhir ārti-daiḥ kim.
tan naḥ prasīda paramēśvara māsma chindya
āśāḥ bhṛtām tvayi cirād aravinda-netra.. 10.29.32-33.

¹³⁶ cittam sukkena bhavatā'pahṛtam grheṣu
yan nir-viśatyuta karāvāpi grhya-kṛtye
pādaḥ padam na calataḥ tava pāda-mūlād
yāmaḥ katham vrajam atho karavāma kim vā.. 10.29.34.

¹³⁷ tām naḥ prasīda vṛjinā'rdana te'ngiri-mūlam
praptā vṛjya vasatis tvad-upāsana'sāḥ.
tvat-sundara-smita-nirikṣaṇa-tivra-kāma-
taptā'tmanām pusaṣa-bhūṣaṇa dehi dāsyam.. 10.29.38.

But though they had dedicated their 'Mine' for the sake of Kṛṣṇa yet their "I" was still vigilant. So they pray:—"You have removed the fear of Vṛndāvana people from all sorts of troubles. So now satisfy our heart's desire".¹³⁸ Kṛṣṇa began to play with them, honouring their fervent request. He indulged in various dalliances. But all the time he had perfect control over himself while he was pleasing the cowherd women.¹³⁹ At this, the exuberance of them found expression in the shape of self-elation. And, having observed their egoity the Lord disappeared at once for appeasing that and thus for showering great blessing on them.¹⁴⁰

The loss of Kṛṣṇa was followed by a frantic search for him. The cowherd girls turned mad and so absorbed they were in Kṛṣṇa that they thought themselves to be Kṛṣṇa himself and imitated his behaviour. Yet all the time they kept on searching. It was not only a search in the physical world but it was a search within as well. In this process they eventually succeeded in breaking through the veil of ignorance, the root cause of all egoity. Thus the cowherd women drowned their 'I' and 'Mine' by intense concentration on Kṛṣṇa and as a result of it they at last regained their spiritual sublimity.¹⁴¹

Now with the dawning of consciousness they realised for the first time that Kṛṣṇa was not a mere child of Yaśodā, that he was in fact the innermost core of all being, the seer, that he had descended on the earth in response to the prayer of the

¹³⁸ *vyaktaṁ bhavān vraja-bhayā'rti-haro'bhijāto
devo yathā'di-puruṣaḥ sura-loka-goptā.
tan no nidhehi kara-ṣaṅkajam āta-bandho
tapta-sthaneṣu ca śiraḥsu ca kinkarīṇām..* 10.29.41.

¹³⁹ *bāhu-prasāra-parirambha-karālakoru-
nivi-ṣṭanā'labhana-narma-nakhā'gra-pātaiḥ.
kṣvelya'valoka-haṣitair vraja-sundarīṇām
uttambhayan rati-patīm ramayāṇcakāra..* 10.29.46.

¹⁴⁰ *evam bhagavataḥ kṛṣṇāl labdha-mānā mahātmanah.
ātmānam menire śrīpām māninyo'bhyadhikam bhuvi..
tāsām tat saubhaga-madam vikṣya mānaḥ ca keśavaḥ.
praśamāya prasādāya tattraivāntar-adhiyate..* 10.29.47-48.

¹⁴¹ *ityunmatta-vaco gopyaḥ kṛṣṇā'nveṣaṇa-kātarāḥ.
līlā bhagavatas tās tā hyanucakruḥ tad-ātmikāḥ.
tato'vilen vanam candra-śyotsnā yavat vibhāvyaḥ.
tamaḥ pravṛjṣam ālakṣya tato nivartuḥ striyaḥ..
tan-manaskāḥ tad-ālāpāḥ tad-vicejṣās tad-ātmikāḥ.
tad-guṇān eva gāyantyō nā'tmā'gārāṇi sasmaruḥ..
punaḥ pulinam āgatya kālīndyāḥ kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāḥ.
samavetā jaguḥ kṛṣṇam tad-āgamana-kāṅkṣitāḥ..* 10.30.14, 42-44.

creator (Brahmā) to save the earth from sacrilege.¹⁴² But this consciousness consolidated their attachment for Kṛṣṇa. They now began to feel that they can no longer bear the separation from Kṛṣṇa; that a moment's absence appeared to them to be the separation for ages. They felt in fact that the creator who made their eye-lashes obstructing the vision of Kṛṣṇa was but a dullard.¹⁴³

It was at this state of mind that they mourned over the hard truth how afflicted Kṛṣṇa must have been now that they are away from him. He must have been wandering in wilderness bestrewn with the beds of thorns and other sharp things. And his feet must have undergone the strain of being affected by these. What a misfortune that the cowherd women cannot find him and render any help in this distress of Kṛṣṇa!¹⁴⁴ But was it not a fact that the cowherd women were also subjected to the distress akin to what they have been contemplating of Kṛṣṇa? But they have disregarded all about it in the thoughts of Kṛṣṇa. This was indeed a definite turning point in their life. So far they pursued Kṛṣṇa because of selfish motive. But now their attachment was crystallized to a stage when selfishness is transcended by *selflessness*. This is in fact the line of demarcation between human love and love divine. While human love is motivated by personal interest love divine finds its culmination in taking delight in surrendering one's own for the sake of the beloved.

When thus the *surrender* of both 'I' and 'Mine', the last and the ninth stratum of ninefold devotion, was complete, appeared Kṛṣṇa in his usual dress and with a smile on his face.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *na khalu gopikā-nandano bhavān
akkhila-dehinām antar-ātma-dṛk.
vikhanasā'rthito viśva-guptye
sakha udeyivān sātvatām kule..* 10.31.4.

¹⁴³ *aṣṭi yad bhavān ahni kānanam
truṣṭir yugāyate tvām a-pāsyatām.
kuṣṭhila-kuntalam śrī-mukhaṁ ca te
jaḍa udikṣatām pakṣma-kṛd dṛśām..* 10.31.15.

¹⁴⁴ *yat te sujāta-carapāmbu-ruham staneṣu
bhūtāḥ śanaiḥ priya dadhimahi karkšeṣu.
tenā'savim aṣasi tad vyathate na kiṁ svit
kūrpādibhir bhramati dhīr bhavad-āyusām naḥ..* 10.31.19.

¹⁴⁵ *tāsām āvir-abhūc cauriḥ smayamāna-mukhāmbujaḥ.
pitā'mbara-dharaḥ sragvī sākṣān manmatha-manmathaḥ..* 10.32.2.

From here begins the third stage of the *Bhāgavata-dharma*. The cowherd women now attained the stage of identity of themselves with *Brahman* for all their afflictions were gone.¹⁴⁶ The finer shades of love now began to manifest themselves. For example, the cowherd women were piquant in view of the persistent callousness on the part of Kṛṣṇa all this time.¹⁴⁷ But Kṛṣṇa pleaded that he pretended to be callous in order to enhance their hankerings after him. He now gave in unambiguous terms due recognition of their most profound love for him: "If I strive to offer something in exchange for this priceless love, I swear that I just cannot do it. Your selfless love in abnegation of the shackles of worldly interests knows no parallel. So let this love yours be its own exchange".¹⁴⁸ In other words, the Lord promised to love them with the same rigour and profundity which they have brought to bear upon their love for him.

While thus the cowherd women became the owners of the priceless treasure of selfless love, Kṛṣṇa thought it fit to initiate them to the mysteries of his eternally blissful nature. He now created a realm of bliss that transcends the limitations of worldly existence. The *Bhāgavata* exhausts the imageries from the literary description of the autumn—and it openly confesses to do so¹⁴⁹—to give expression to the enjoyment of bliss in which the cowherd women now participated. In terms of literary criticism, such union of Kṛṣṇa with the cowherd women represented the perfect revelation of the sentiment of love (*prema-rasa*), in which the nucleus (*ālambana*) was Kṛṣṇa, the exciting conditions (*uddīpana*) were the full moon, the fragrance of flowers etc., the expressive conditions (*anubhāva*) were the different

¹⁴⁶ *tibhir vidhūta-śokābhir bhagavān acyuto vṛtaḥ.*
vyarocata'dhikam tāta puruṣaḥ śaktibhir yathā.. 10.32.10

¹⁴⁷ *bhajato'nu bhajantyeke eka etad-viparyayam.*
nobhayāmi ca bhajantyeke etān no brūhi sādhu bhoḥ.. 10.32.16.

¹⁴⁸ *na pāraye'haṁ nir-avadya-samyujām*
sva-sādhu-kytām vibudhā'yujā'pi vaḥ.
yā mā'bhajan dur-jara-geha-śṛṅkhalāḥ
saṁvṛtā tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhunā.. 10.32.22

¹⁴⁹ *evam śaśāṅkā'msu-virājitā nīlāḥ.*
sa satya-kāmo'nurā'balā-geṇaḥ.
siṣeva ātmnyavaruddha-saurataḥ
sarvāḥ śarat-kāṇya-kathā rasāśrayāḥ.. 10.33.25

gestures of cowherd girls and the fluctuating conditions (*sañcāri-bhāva*) were pique, sorrow etc. on the part of the *gopīs*.

In this revelation of Kṛṣṇa's nature as all-bliss, popularly described as "*rāsa-līlā*", each of the cowherd women embraced bliss in its perfection. This is why the *Bhāgavata* describes Kṛṣṇa to take as many forms as there were cowherd women to meet him. And their ecstasy is described in terms of a dance. They danced in a circle. Now, circle has no starting point and no end. In other words, the cowherd women entered into the realm of bliss which knows no beginning and end—eternal bliss perpetually renewing itself.¹⁵⁰ As indicated before, the *Bhāgavata* had to take refuge in literary imageries to delineate this enjoyment of ecstasy because enjoyment of ecstasy *per se* is beyond all description. So the *Bhāgavata* had to condescend to popular imageries in terms of which ordinary people can at best conjure them up in their minds in their own ways. Seen in this light, as suggested so far, the allegation is likely to vanish.

The *Bhāgavata* conception of Kṛṣṇa is thus intensely human yet perfectly divine. Such a conception has every claim on our feelings. If those feelings become geared to Kṛṣṇa they provide for the highest good of mankind. It was this intensely human yet divine nature which puzzled Kuntī. When Yośodā wanted to bind him with a rope in order to curb his boisterousness, the boy Kṛṣṇa was all in tears and his eyes suggested fear. This state was a riddle for Kuntī when she considered the fact that Kṛṣṇa was himself the fear of all fears.¹⁵¹ The concept of Kṛṣṇa is a synthesis of the immanent and the transcendent, of religion and metaphysics.

¹⁵⁰ *rāsotsavaḥ saṁpravṛtto gopī-maṇḍala-maṇḍitaḥ. 10.33.3a*
kṛtvā tāvantam ātmānam yāvatir goṇa-yoṣitaḥ.
reme sa bhagavāms tābhir ātmā'rāmo'pi līlayā.. 10.33.19.

¹⁵¹ *gopyā'dade tvayi kṛtā'gasi dāma tāvad*
yā te daśā'ṣṭru-kalilā'njana-sambhramā'kṣam.
vaktraṁ niniya bhaya-bhāvanayā sthitasya
sā mām vimohayati bhir api yad bibheti.. 1.8.31

CHAPTER VI

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SECOND GRADE

PARAMĀTMAN (VIṢṆU)

Paramātman or Lord Viṣṇu is a creation of pure Indian mythology.¹ Monistic trend, conspicuously noticeable in Indian thought from its earliest record, the *R̥g-Veda*, found tangible expression in the concept of Viṣṇu. In the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, the *Puruṣa-Viṣṇu* is said to have covered the entire earth and yet his all-pervasive nature was too broad to be exhausted therein.² In the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā*, Viṣṇu is stated to have pervaded the world with his three strides and yet his fourth stride reached out into the world beyond, that ordinary eyes cannot penetrate.³ The aspect of all-pervasiveness which thus obtained the sanction of unbroken tradition naturally led the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* to suggest the following derivation of the term "Viṣṇu": "It is derived from the root 'viś' (to enter) and Lord Viṣṇu is so called because with his native power he has entered and pervaded the entire universe".⁴ Viṣṇu, then, stood for the all-pervasive Reality, the original *Puruṣa* (*ādi-puruṣa*)—the vital principle of life (*Paramātman*) that has animated material mass (*pura*).

As the all-embracing principle of animation, Viṣṇu legitimately occupied his rightful place in Nature organised by speculative thinking into man and his environment. In man, Viṣṇu was revealed in mind in the depth of meditation (*mañiṣā*)⁵ and in the physical universe Viṣṇu's all-embracing nature

¹ *Vedic Mythology*, p. 20.

² *sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvā'tyatigṣhad datā'ṅgulam* RV 10.90.1.

³ *idam viṣṇur vicakrame tredhā nidhadhe padam samūḍham aśya pāmsure svāhā* VS 5.15.

⁴ *yasmād viṣṭam idam viśvam tarya śaktiā mahātmanaḥ tasmāt sa procyate viṣṇur viśe dhātōḥ praveśanāt.* VP 3.1.45.

⁵ *sato bandhūm asati nir-avindan hyāi prāṭhyā kavayo mañiṣā Nāsadiya-Sūkta* RV 10.129.4.

integrated into his own personality the three worlds, along with gods and other sentient beings. The *Bhāgavata* has developed, into a grand unity, the two different forms of Viṣṇu—one revealed in the heart of man and the other expressed through the universe. Such unity was not the mere juxtaposition of both the forms, but involved a continuous evolution from the material to the transcendental, finding its consummation in the concept of unique consciousness that excludes the possibility of all duality. This means that the delineation of the concept of Viṣṇu falls under three hierarchical stages—the gross, the subtle and the transcendental. In other words, in our quest for Truth, we first direct our attention to the world, then we go beyond it to our own self and, finally, having cast away our material vesture, we enter infinity, the greatest fulfilment of our own self, the *Paramātman*. From the state of fragmentation marked by darkness and limitations, we thereby achieve the immutable integration characterised by light and perfect freedom from all limitations. This is what the *Bhāgavata* calls reaching the feet of *Vaikuṇṭha-pati*.

The cosmic Man whom, in the wake of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, the *Bhāgavata* calls "*Vairāja-Puruṣa*,"⁶ is the unity of the fourteen worlds. In his cosmic structure the lowest region (*pātāla*) forms the feet and the highest region (*satya-loka*) the head. In between the two extremes come the other worlds. If, on the other hand, the more orthodox view is adhered to, the earth is his feet, the heaven his head and the aerial space his naval region.⁷ But the cosmic *Puruṣa* is not exhausted in the gross physical worlds—three or fourteen—but he includes much more. He includes the subtle world consisting of the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*)—*Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra* and

⁶ *aṇḍa-koṣe śarīre'smin sapta-varaṇa-samyute. vairājaḥ puruṣo yo'sau bhagavān dhāraṇāśrayaḥ...* 2.1.25.

⁷ *bhūr-lokaḥ kalpitāḥ padbhyāṁ bhuvar-loko'sya nābhītaḥ. hṛdā svar-loka-urasā mahar-loko mahātmanah... grīvāyāṁ jana-loko'sya tapo-lokaḥ stana-dvayāt. mūrdhabhiḥ satya-lokaḥ tu brahma-lokaḥ sanātanaḥ... tat-katyāṁ cātalam kṛtām urubhyāṁ vitalaṁ vibho. jānubhyāṁ sutalam śuddham jaṅghābhyāṁ tu talātalam... mahātalan tu gulphābhyāṁ prapadābhyāṁ rasātalam. pātalam pāda-talata iti loka-mayaḥ pumān... bhūr-lokaḥ kalpitāḥ padbhyāṁ bhuvar-loko'sya nābhītaḥ. svar-lokaḥ kalpito mūrdhnā iti vā loka-kalpanā...* 2.5.38-42.

Citta—and their corresponding gods—Candra, Viriñca, Rudra and Dharma.⁸ Nay, his all-embracing form further reaches out into the Unmanifest (*a-vyakta*), the primordial cause of the manifest worlds—gross as well as subtle.⁹ To complete the picture of the cosmic personality, the gods like Indra are said to be his arms, the sun his organ of sight, the god of death his teeth, his illusive power his smile, unending creation his glance, the clouds his dark hair, the twilight his garment. The *Brāhmaṇa* caste is said to be his mouth, the warrior caste his arms, the merchants his thighs and the *Sūdras* of dark colour (*kṛṣṇa-varṇa*) his feet.¹⁰

Such conception of the cosmic *Puruṣa* is obviously an improvement on the concept in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. While the *Sūkta* is primarily confined to the materialistic representation of *Puruṣa* and that also to the three worlds only—the earth, the heaven and the air—the *Bhāgavata* has not only expanded the three worlds into fourteen but has gone much deeper—into the subtle and then into the primordial cause. In the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* the only reference to the extra-gross reality is mind (*Manas*). The *Bhāgavata* has elaborated this concept into four realities *Manas*, *Buddhi* etc. and then traced the original source of all these realities. The personality of Viṣṇu, thus enriched by the incorporation of additional realities, was intended to satisfy the demands for the visualisation of unity behind the bewildering details of physical creation—gross, subtle and causal—¹¹ by means of ordinary experience, as it was commended to appear

⁸ *candro mano yasya dṛg arka ātmā*
aham samudro jagharam bhujendraḥ..
romāṇi yasyauṣadhyo'mbu-vāhāḥ
keśa viriñco dhīṣaṇā visargaḥ..
prajāpatiḥ hṛdayam yasya dharmah
sa vai bhavān puruṣo loka-kalpaḥ.. 10.63.35cd,36.

⁹ *avyaktam āhur hṛdayam* 2.134c.

¹⁰ *indrādayo bāhava āhur usrāḥ*
dyaur akṣiṇī cakṣur abhūt pataṅgaḥ
dramṣṭṛa yamaḥ sneha-kalā dvijāni
hāso janonmāda-kari ca māyā
duranta-sargo yad-epāṅga-mokṣaḥ..
īśasya keśān vidur ambu-vāhān
vāsas tu sandhyām kuruvarya bhūmnaḥ.
brahmānanam kṣatra-bhujo mahātmā
vid ūrur aṅghri-śṛita-kṛṣṇa-varṇaḥ 2.129a, 30a, 31bod, 34ab, 37.

¹¹ *etad rūpaṁ bhagavato hyarūpaṣya cid-ātmanah.*
māyā-guṇair viracitaṁ mahad-ādibhir ātmanī.. 1.3.30.

in intuitive vision in the depth of man's mind.¹² Cosmic *Puruṣa* is, then, the first discovery of thought in man's search for the Universal through the physical existence. The search was crowned with the presence of the cosmic *Puruṣa* both within and without.

Paramātmān, the first principle of animation, is not static existence but is the vital urge, perpetual dynamism ever renewing itself through all possible ways of self-expansion. That is how Viṣṇu, the being, appears as Viṣṇu, the becoming. A becoming has three successive stages—origin, sustenance and dissolution. The universe, the becoming, originates from, is sustained by and finally dissolves into *Brahman* which is Viṣṇu, the being. When man speculates upon the ultimate reality, the origin and the dissolution of the universe do not so much engage his consideration, because his attention becomes engrossed in the universe as an established reality. Being a part of it, man is instinctively committed to its continuance. In the face of its fleeting nature, man invokes divine intervention to ensure its stability. So, when he divined three gods associated with the origin, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, his emphasis was naturally upon the god of sustenance. Viṣṇu, the universal spirit of the *Rg-Veda*, the young lovable god of war who had helped Indra in his martial exploits and who had upheld the moral order (*ṛta*), naturally endeared himself as the god of protection. With increasing emphasis on this protective character, Viṣṇu had undergone complete orientation of his constitution and become the eight-handed Viṣṇu, a magnanimous personality.

Man is prone to finding his own reflection in the objective world. Not only does he imbue matter with spirit but he visions the world in his own shape. The *Bhāgavata* has duly noticed this tendency in man to account for the conception of Truth as his own shadow. Thus, according to the *Bhāgavata*,¹³ the universal Man (*Puruṣa*) was conceived by man in his own

¹² *paśyantyado rūpam adabhra-cakṣuṣā
sahasra-pādurū-bhujā'nanā'dbhutam.
sahasra-mūrdha-śravaṇā'kṣi-nāśikam
sahasra-maulyambara-kunḍalollasat* 1.3.4.

¹³ *yāvān ayaṁ vai puruṣo yāvatyā saṁsthayā mitaḥ.
tāvān asāvapi mahā-puruṣo loka-saṁsthayā..* 12.11.9.

image. But, as the *Bhāgavata* is aware,¹⁴ the cosmic Man is a crude materialistic representation of Viṣṇu. With the progress of thought the crude form of Viṣṇu was chiselled into a supple delicate shape and the first result of creative imagination in this direction was Viṣṇu endowed with eight arms. Already in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* arms stood for the principle of activity and protection, embodied in the warrior caste; and, the new conception of Viṣṇu with emphasis on his act of protection was naturally moulded in terms of arms.

The protection of Viṣṇu brought in its pale all the eight quarters—east, west, north, south and their four joints of one with the other. The *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* says that eight directions to which the all-pervasive protection of Viṣṇu was extended are represented by the eight arms of Viṣṇu.¹⁵ Viṣṇu thus stretched out his eight arms into eight directions so that all beings, wherever they might possibly be, could come under his shield of protection. As animism discovered eight gods—Indra (east), Varuṇa (west), Kubera (north), Yama (south), Agni (south-east), Sūrya (south-west), Candra (north-east) and Vāyu (north-west)—each committed to the protection of a specific direction—the *Bhāgavata* takes these protecting gods¹⁶ (*loka-pālas*) to merge into the essence of Viṣṇu, as his eight arms.

In this new conception of Viṣṇu the original trait of the war god reasserted itself in the shape of eight weapons in the eight arms. They are: the wheel (*sudarśana cakra*), the conch-shell (*pāñcājanya śaṅkha*), the club (*kaumodakī gadā*), the sword (*aśi*), the bow (*śārṅga dhanuḥ*), the arrows (*iṣu*), the plough (*halā*) and the pestle (*muṣala*).¹⁷ The plough and the pestle have alternated with the shield (*carman*) and the noose (*pāśa*)¹⁸ or with the shield and the lotus (*padma*).¹⁹ Of these, the wheel and the conch-shell seem to be the most fundamental

¹⁴ *vīṣeṣas tasya deho'yaṁ sthaviṣṭhaś ca sthaviyasām. yatreḍaṁ vyajyate viśvaṁ bhūtaṁ bhavyaṁ bhavac ca sat..* 2.1.24.

¹⁵ *diśaś catasro dharma-jñā tāvatyo vidīḥ tathā. bāhavo'ṣṭau vinirdiṣṭās tasya devasya śārṅgiṇaḥ..* VD 3.47.8.

¹⁶ *tad bāhavo loka-pālāḥ* 12.11.7c.

¹⁷ *sudarśanaṁ pāñcājanyaṁ gadā'siṣu-dhanuḥ-halān. muṣalaṁ kaustubhaṁ mālāṁ śrīvatsaṁ cā'nupūjayet..* 11.27.27.

¹⁸ *śaṅkha-cakrā'si-carmaṣu-dhanuḥ-pāśa-gadā-dharaḥ.* 6.4.36 cd.

¹⁹ *śaṅkhā'bja-cakra-śara-cāpa-gadā'si-carma-vyagrair hiraṇmaya-bhujaiḥ..* 4.7.20 cd.

weapons of Viṣṇu. In the *Rg-Veda* the sun is a brilliant weapon;²⁰ and, like Viṣṇu, both the wheel and the conch-shell with their glowing colour and circular form can be derived from the sun. When the *Bhāgavata* describes²¹ the conch-shell to possess intolerable lustre (*a-sahya tejas*) and thousand spokes (*daśa-śatā'ra*) comparable to the thousand rays (*sahasra-raśmī*) of the sun, it gives definite indication of its solar origin. And, the solar character of the wheel as the typical weapon of Viṣṇu is only too obvious to require specific corroboration. But, in the light of the fact that the *Bhāgavata* has conceived Viṣṇu as the unity of the eight protectors of directions (*loka-pālas*), the wheel and the conch-shell can as well be traced to these gods, indicative of the contributions of these gods towards the formation of Viṣṇu. If the sun is the prototype of the wheel then the golden rising sun and Indra, the protector god of the east, belong to the same region viz, the east. This association of Indra with the wheel is transferred to Viṣṇu when Indra himself came to form a part of Viṣṇu. Or, we might say that the banner (*dhvaja*) and the thunder-bolt—the specific signs of Indra—clung to the feet of Viṣṇu while the wheel came to Viṣṇu from Sūrya of the south-west. The conch-shell, a product of the sea, can legitimately be taken to have been donated by Varuṇa (the god of waters), the protector of the west. The other weapons can similarly be traced to the other gods of directions. From Yama, the god of death, came the smashing weapon club (*gadā*), from Kubera (the god of wealth) of the north the lotus symbolizing prosperity, from Varuṇa (the *Vedic* god) the noose, and, from Vāyu, the wind god of the north-west bringing in his train drenching shower and rainbow, arrows and the bow. *Hala* (plough) and *muṣala* (if the word be interpreted as the pestle for thrashing grains from the paddy), standing for cultivation and agriculture, may be connected with the god of fire (Agni) oblations to which are said to enhance food. The sword (*asi*) and shield (*carman*) may represent the lightning and the cloud respec-

²⁰ *sūryo jyotiṣ carati citram āyudham* RV 5.63.4.

²¹ *sañcintayed daśa-śatā'ram a-sahya-tejaḥ*
śaṅkham 3.28.27c.

tively, associated with Indra, the god of thunderbolt. Finally the moon is said to stand for the mind.

The suggestions adduced here are liable to further investigation. They are intended to bring home the fact that the conception of the Viṣṇu with eight arms is but the outcome of the naturalistic concept of the Viṣṇu as recorded in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. The eight arms can therefore be obtained as refinement of their crude naturalistic prototypes. Indra in his original form is no other than the eastern sun as Varuṇa is the setting sun in the western sky. The ideas of the sacrificial period have moulded the concept of Yama etc. Yama, the god of death, is linked up with the path of Fathers (*pitṛ-yāna-mārga*) laid out in the south. Agni on which sacrificial oblations are poured for attaining heaven is placed at the south-east corner of the *gārhapatya* fire and that gave rise to the conception of Agni being the god of the south-east. To the north of that fire is another fire leading to the path of gods (*deva-yāna-mārga*) and this path is associated with all sorts of divine wealth. This gave rise to Kubera being the god of the north. Similarly, as the full moon rises from the north-east and the setting sun in the *Dakṣiṇāyana* period of the year reclines towards the south-west, they are said to be the gods of these directions respectively. Monsoon in the northern and western India breaks with the north-western wind carrying clouds pregnant with water. So Vāyu whose conception was being formed when the Aryans were largely in the Indus valley would naturally be conceived as the deity of the north-west. From the point of the philosophy of the *Srīmad-Bhāgavata* it is interesting to note how natural phenomena which embodied the grotesque form of the cosmic Man was further chiselled into the form of the Viṣṇu with eight arms, the all-pervasive Reality that suffused all quarters with its protective force.

Gradually more realistic approach reduced the eight quarters to four and the protection of four quarters was represented by four arms of Viṣṇu. As the Viṣṇu with four arms emerged from the Viṣṇu with eight arms, and, as the weapons on those eight arms stood for the martial character of Viṣṇu, the same trait prevailed upon the process of re-shaping Viṣṇu with four arms. Viṣṇu now held in three arms the wheel, the conch-

shell and the club. In the meantime the “bhaga” or “bharga” of the *Rg-Vedic* Viṣṇu was asserting itself as his majesty. The new conception of Viṣṇu accommodated this aspect as well by the recognition of the lotus in his fourth hand²² which only was still left free. Thus, while the wheel, the conch-shell and the club maintained his martial character, the lotus indicated the growing stature of Viṣṇu by the elaboration of the concept of “bhaga”.²³ But until four-handed Viṣṇu could establish himself so well as to replace the earlier concept of the eight-handed Viṣṇu, both the forms of Viṣṇu—the four-handed and the eight-handed—elicited equal homage for some time, as found in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*.²⁴

Parallel to the enlargement of the Viṣṇu concept towards the sublime altitude of sovereignty, the historical Kṛṣṇa was also mustering stupendous influence so much so that he verged upon the prominence of Viṣṇu himself. The first contact between Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa resulted in the recognition of the historical Kṛṣṇa as a fragment or part of Viṣṇu. The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* records that the great (*mahā-bala*) Viṣṇu tore a couple of hair—one white and the other black (*sita-kṛṣṇa*)—and they were born as Bala-rāma and Kṛṣṇa respectively.²⁵ The *Mahābhārata* further elaborates this idea. According to the *Mahābhārata*, white hair entered Rohiṇī and black hair Devakī, both belonging to the family of the Yadus, and consequently white Bala-rāma and dark Kṛṣṇa were born respectively. Kṛṣṇa was called “keśava” because he came out of a hair (*keśa*) and by colour (*va*, the

²² *bhrājamānaṁ padma-karaṁ śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-dharam.*

10.39.52ab.

²³ *bhagavān bhaga-śabdārthaṁ līlā-kamalam udvahan* 12.11.18 ab.

²⁴ *pralambāṣṭa-bhujam viṣṇum athavāpi catur-bhujam cintayed brahma-bhūtaṁ taṁ pīta-nirmala-vāsasam..*

VP 6.7.82cd, 83cd.

Both the forms of Viṣṇu, the four-handed and the eight-handed, are met in the *Padma-Purāṇa* and the *Bṛhat-Saṁhitā* of Varāhamihira (600 A.D.). The Annual Report of the Archeological Survey of India (New Series) also records four-armed Viṣṇu-image of late Kushan or still later period discovered at Taxila (1935-36 Pl.XL a). The two forms therefore may be presumed to have taken shape between 400 and 600 A.D.

²⁵ *evam saṁstūyamānas tu bhagavān paramēśvaraḥ.*

ujjahārātmanah keśau sita-kṛṣṇau mahāmune.. ibid. 5.1.60.

first letter of *varṇa*) was black.²⁶ As Śrīdhara suggests,²⁷ "*keśa*" need not be taken literally and the *Bhāgavata* uses the word "*Kalā*" (fragment) to describe the nature of the Kṛṣṇa Descend.²⁸ It may be noted here that the usage of the word "*keśa*" to mean a "fragment" is just the traditional way of describing a part of the whole. The *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, for example, describes the individual soul to be just a small particle of a hair (*vāla*) of Reality.²⁹

The contact of the historical Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu gradually meant a fusion between the two. As a result, the historical Kṛṣṇa emerged as Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, a radically overhauled personality. The dignity attained by the historical Kṛṣṇa due to his identification with Viṣṇu had far-reaching effect. Balarāma, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, three other outstanding personalities of the same family, were also admitted to similar honour and the result was the emergence of the doctrine of the four *Vyūhas*.

All the four personalities—Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, Balarāma, Pradyumna and Aniruddha—were now adjusted to the general pattern viz, the four-handed Viṣṇu; and, the wealth of the eight-handed Viṣṇu was fully exploited to justify the mutual variation of the four forms. The personality of the eight-handed Viṣṇu was dissolved and his weapons were distributed among the newly-created four forms. While the lotus and the conch-shell were common to all, the other weapons varied in twos. Thus the club and the wheel of Vāsudeva varied with

²⁶ *sa cā'pi keśau harir uccakarta
ekam suklaṁ aparaṁ cā'pi kṛṣṇam.
tau cā'pi keśāvavīṣatām yadūnām
kule striyau rohiṇīm devakiṁ ca..
tayoṛ eko bala-bhādro babhūva
yo'sau lūetas tasya devasya keśaḥ.
kṛṣṇo dvitīyaḥ keśavaḥ sambabhūva
keśo yo'sau varṇataḥ kṛṣṇa uktaḥ..*

MB 1.197.32-33, quoted by Śrīdhara on 2.7.26.

²⁷ *tac ca na keśa-mātrā'vatārā'bhiprāyam*—Śrīdhara on 2.7.26.

²⁸ *kleśa-vyayāya kalayā sita-kṛṣṇa-keśaḥ* 2.7.26b.

²⁹ *vālā'gra-tata-bhāgasya tatadhā kalpitasya ca
bhāgo jīvaḥ sa pīṇeyaḥ.* SU 5.9.

the pestle and the plough of Bala-rāma, the arrows and the bow of Pradyumna and the sword and the shield of Aniruddha.³⁰

The prominence of the lotus and the conch-shell, as reflected in their persistence in all the four *Vyūhas*, suggests the shifting of emphasis from Viṣṇu's martial character to his sovereignty betrothed to the advancement of peace and prosperity of the universe, although the weapons of Viṣṇu are still active to further this supreme cause. It may be mentioned here that the two-handed Viṣṇu who may be considered as the first concrete representation of the *Puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* and as such the precursor of even the eight-handed Viṣṇu, had the club and the wheel in his hands that exhibited his martial trait;³¹ and, the same character found its consummation in the conception of the eight-handed Viṣṇu. The protective quality of Viṣṇu that had been brooding through the different stages of the Viṣṇu concept now came to its own in the form of Vāsudeva wherein Viṣṇu's animal powers became subdued to the unfoldment of his divine nature. Viṣṇu was now all protection dedicated to the peace and prosperity of the universe.

The rise of the doctrine of the *Vyūhas* further suggests the consolidation of the concept of the four-handed Viṣṇu and the consequent disintegration of the eight-handed Viṣṇu concept. The emergence of the concept of the two-handed Viṣṇu, referred to above, was nothing more than the indication of the ideal set before religious imagination. The eight-handed Viṣṇu was the first conscious attempt to humanise the cosmic Giant

30

Vajra uvāca

*vāsudevasya devasya bahu-rūpasya bhārgava.
brūhi me rūpa-nirmāṇaṁ śāśvatasya mahātmanah..*

Mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

*eka-vaktras catur-bāhuḥ saumya-rūpaḥ sudarśanaḥ.
utphulla-kamalaṁ pāṇau kuryād devasya dakṣiṇe.
vāma-pāṇi-gataṁ śaṅkhaṁ śaṅkhā'kāraṁ tu kārayet..
dakṣiṇe tu gadā devī tanu-madhyā sulocanā.
vāma-bhāga-gatāś cakraḥ.
vāsudevasya rūpeṇa kāryaḥ saṅkaraṇaḥ prabhuḥ.
gadā-sthāne ca muṣalaṁ cakra-sthāne ca lāṅgalam.
vāsudevasya rūpeṇa pradyumnaś ca tathā bhavet.
cakra-sthāne bhavet cāpaṁ gadā-sthāne tathā śaram.
etaḥ eva tathā rūpaṁ aniruddhasya kārayet.
cakra-sthāne bhavet carma gadā-sthāne'sir eva ca.*

VD 3.85.1; 2ab, 10-11, 13a, 21ab, 22ab, 23ab, 24ab, 25ab, 26ab.

³¹ *eka-vaktro dvi-bāhuḥ ca gadā-cakra-dharaḥ prabhuḥ.
deha-vinyāsam āparaṁ prāg uktam kirtitaṁ hareḥ..* ibid 3.64.2.

(*Puruṣa*). The four-handed Viṣṇu with his fusion with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva (i.e., the historical Kṛṣṇa) was an important step in this direction. The amalgam between Viṣṇu and the historical Kṛṣṇa gave rise to the concept of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, indicated above. In Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, thought found for the first time an objective (human) counterpart as the object (the historical Kṛṣṇa) transformed itself in the light of thought. In Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, therefore, thought and reality coalesced, indicative of a merger of metaphysics and history.

One of the effects of this merger is reflected in Viṣṇu's change of colour. The *R̥g-Vedic* Viṣṇu, as Savitr̥, is golden-handed³² and the *Bhāgavata* adheres to this aspect in its earlier conception of Viṣṇu. The four-handed *Yajña-Puruṣa*, for instance, is golden³³ with golden hands³⁴ and possessing thighs comparable in colour to the yellow "*ataśī*" flower.³⁵ He is in fact like molten gold all over his body (*tapta-jāmbūnada-prakhyā*).³⁶ But Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu is as dark as the blue lotus³⁷ or the rainy cloud.³⁸ That this colour is characteristic of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu is noticed also by the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* which describes the colour of Vāsudeva as dark as the cloud charged with water (*salilā'dhmāta-meghā'bha*).³⁹ The second effect of this fusion is the impetus given by the historical Kṛṣṇa for the emergence of *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa* concept. In the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*,

³² *hiraṇya-pāṇiḥ savitā* RV 1.35.9.

³³ *hiraṇmayam puruṣa-viśeṣam ṛtvik-sadasya-grha-patayaḥ...*
upastathuḥ. 5.3.3.

³⁴ *hiraṇmaya-bhujair iva karṇikāraḥ* 4.7.20d.

³⁵ *ūrū suparṇa-bhujayor adhi-sobhamānā-
 vojo-nidhi atasikā-kusumā'vabhāsau.* 3.28.24ab.

³⁶ *tapta-jāmbūnada-prakhyam* 11.27.38a

³⁷ *nilotpala-dāla-syāmam laṅkha-cakra-gadādharam.* 3.28.13cd.

³⁸ *ghana-syāmam* 10.39.46a.

³⁹ *salilā'dhmāta-meghā'bhaḥ* VD 3.85.2c.

the epithets like "*bhagavat*"⁴⁰ and "*puruṣottama*"⁴¹ are applicable to Viṣṇu, he being the highest Reality therein, and such usage reflects earlier thought on Viṣṇu. But the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* itself has begun to consider Vāsudeva the highest Reality,⁴² nay, the very Viṣṇu with another name.⁴³ Naturally this trend of thought further accentuated the tranquil aspect of Viṣṇu. The club and the wheel, the last vestiges of his martial trait, disappeared as did his two hands with the result that the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu was now left with his two hands to become *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa*. In the *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa* we come across the *Pāñcajanya* conch-shell which he blew with the breaking out of the great *Mahābhārata* war. The lotus was transformed into the *gopīs* in so far as it stood for *Śrī* who, as we have already noticed, was metamorphosed into the *gopīs*, the companions of the love-god Kṛṣṇa.

But before Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu could be finally crystallized into *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa*, the fusion of Vāsudeva (the historical Kṛṣṇa) and Viṣṇu meant the intermixture of the *Vedic* and the *Tāntric* ideas⁴⁴ and the wealth of imageries lavished upon the Viṣṇu

⁴⁰ *tad eva bhagavad-vācyam svarūpaṁ paramātmanah. vācako bhagavac-chabdas tasyādyasyāḥśayātmanah.*

The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* defines *Bhagavān* as follows:—
utpattiṁ pralayaṁ caiva bhūtānām āgatiṁ gatiṁ.
vetti vidyām avidyām ca sa vācya bhagavān iti..

This verse shows that knowledge forms the very essence of *Bhagavān* although "*bhaga*" means all the six types of majesty:—

jñāna-śakti-balaiśvarya-vīrya-tejāṁśyaśeṣataḥ.
bhagavac-chabda-vācyāni vinā heyair guṇādibhiḥ.. VP 6.5.69,78,79.

⁴¹ *tasmāc ca sūkṣmādi-viśeṣaṇānām*
agocare yat paramātma-rūpaṁ.
kim apyacintyaṁ tava rūpaṁ asti
tasmai namas te puruṣottamāya.. ibid 1.19.75.

⁴² *sakalam idam ajasya yasya rūpaṁ*
parama-padātmavatas sanātanasya.
tam a-nidhanam a-śeṣa-bīja-bhūtaṁ
prabhum amalāṁ praṇatāśma vāsudevam.. ibid 3.17.34.

⁴³ *sarga-sthiti-vināśānām jagato yo jaganmayah.*
mūla-bhūto namas tasmai viṣṇave paramātmane..
sarvatrāṣau samastaṁ ca vaśatyatrete vai yataḥ
tataḥ sa vāsudevoti vidvadbhiḥ paripaṭhyate.. ibid 1.2.4.12.
Vide also 6.5.80.

⁴⁴ *taṁ tadā puruṣaṁ martyā mahā-rājopalakṣaṇam.*
yajanti veda-tantrābhyāṁ paraṁ jijnāsavo nṛpa.. 11.5.28.

concept from both the sources completely transformed it into a world of grandeur and beauty. The vast mass of imageries was organised under four heads—physical features (*aṅga*), weapons (*āyudha*), ornaments (*ākāṣa*) and accessories (*upāṅga*). Based on the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, the description of Viṣṇu, often presented by the *Bhāgavata* under these categories, is next to none in the display of pictorial imagination: The palms of Viṣṇu's feet are marked by the thunderbolt (*vajra*), the hook (*aṁkuśa*), the banner (*dhvaja*) and the lotus (*padma*). His feet are radiant (*jyotirmaya*), are saturated with the light emanating from red fingers, and are stuck up with jingling anklets (*nūpura*). His knees are constantly served by Śrī, his consort. His thighs are as golden as the "ataśī" flower. Yellow garment (*pīta-vāsas*) fastened with golden girdle (*kāñcī*) flows down to his anklets. His naval region is the source of the cosmic lotus out of which the worlds are generated. The pair of nipples are dark as emerald but have become whitened with the glow of his golden necklace (*hāra*). His chest is the permanent residence of Śrī on the left and Śrī-vatsa (circular mole) on the right. His arms, at the upper and the lower ends, are decorated with bracelets and bangles (*aṅgada*, *keyūra*, *kaṭaka*) and at his hands are the four weapons—the conch-shell, the wheel, the club and the lotus. At his neck are suspended (i) the *kaustubha* jewel, (ii) the golden necklace coming upto his chest, (iii) the sacrificial thread reaching his naval region, and (iv) the *Vana-mālā* flowing down upto his knees. Viṣṇu's face is brightened with the rays of his two ear-rings shaped like a "makara". It possesses a sharp nose, a pair of eyes red like the core of the lotus, a forehead interspersed with stray locks of hair (*kuntala*). Above all, the beauty of the face is heightened with a blooming smile radiating from his eyes through his eye-lashes, in fluctuating shades and delicacy, and casting a spell of tranquillity and peace all around. At his head the curled locks of dark hair are crowned with a golden crest (*mukuta*). He is calm (*śānta*), with budding youth (*kiśora*) evenly distributed all over his supple limbs. He holds in one hand the lotus while the other hand is resting on his vehicle, *Garuda*. A unique person with beautiful ears and the twin petals of lips, his masterly personality has completely en-

grossed religious imagination.⁴⁵ It is no wonder then that the *Bhāgavata* would accept this form as the standard constitution of Viṣṇu and the conception of the earlier forms—the two-

⁴⁵ *sañcintayed bhagavatas caraṇā'ravindam
vajrā'mkusa-dhvaja-saroruha-lāñchanā'dhyam.
uttuṅga-rakta-vilasan-nakha-cakra-vāla-
jyotsnābhir āhata-mahad-hṛdayā'ndhakāram..
jānu-dvayam jalaja-locanayā jananyā
lakṣmyā'kṣilasya sura-vanditayā vidhātuh.
ūrvor nidhāya kara-pallava-rociṣā yat
samlākitam hṛdi vibhor abhāvasya kuryāt..
ūrū suparna-bhujayor adhi-śobhamānā-
vojo-nidhī atasikā-kusumā'vabhāsau.
vyālambi-pīta-vara-vāsasi vartamāna-
kañci-kalāpa-parirambhi nitamba-bimbam..
nābhi-hṛdam bhuvana-koṣa-guhodarastham
yatrā'tma-yoni-dhiṣaṇā'khila-loka-padmam.
vyūḍham harin-maṇi-vṛja-stanayor amuṣya
dhyāyed dvayam viśada-hāra-mayūkha-gauram..
vakṣo'dhivāsam ṛṣabhasya mahā-vibhūteḥ
pumsām mano-nayana-niroṣṭim ādadhānam.
kaṇṭham ca kaustubha-maṇer adhi-bhūṣaṇā'rtham
kuryān manasyakhila-loka-namaskṛtasya..
bāhūni ca mandara-gireḥ parivartanena
nir-nikta-bāhu-valayān adhi-loka-pālān.
sañcintayed daśa-tatāram a-sahya-tejaḥ
sañkhaṇ ca tat-kara-saroruha-rājahamsam..
kaumodakīm bhāgavato dayitām smareta
digdhām arāti-bhaja-ṣoṇita-kardamena.
mālām madhu-vrata-varūtha-giropaghūṣṭām
cāitṛyasya tattvam amalām maṇim aśya kaṇṭhe..
bhṛtyā'nukampita-dhiyeḥa gṛhita-mūrteḥ
sañcintayed bhāgavato vadanā'ravindam.
yad viṣphuran-makara-kunḍala-valgitena
vidyotiā'mala-kapolam udāra-nāsam..
yac-chri-niketam alibhiḥ pariṣevyamānam
bhūtyā svayā kuṣila-kuntala-vṛnda-juṣṭam.
mīna-dvayā'trayam adhikṣipad abja-netram
dhyāyen mano-mayām a-tandrita ullaṣad-bhru..
tasyā'valokam adhikām kṛpayā'ti-ghora-
tāpa-trayopaśamanāya nistṛṣṭam akṣnoḥ.
snigdha-smitā'ngunītam vipula-prasādam
dhyāyec ciraṁ vitata-bhāvanayā guhāyam..
hāsam harer avanatā'khila-loka-tivra-
ṣokā'fru-sāgara-viṣoṣaṇam atyudāram.
sammohanāya racitam nija-māyayā'sya
bhrū-maṇḍalam muni-kṛte makara-dhvajasya..
dhyānā'yanam prahasitam bahulā'dharausṭhā-
bhāsā'rupāyita-tanu-dvija-kunda-paṅkti.
dhyāyet sva-dahra-kuhare'vasitasya viṣṇor
bhaktyā'drayā'pita-manā na pṛthag didyket..
10.39.51 mentions "brahma-sūtra" on Viṣṇu's neck and 3.15.40
describes his hand on Garuḍa. The description of his face is:—
cāru-prasanna-vadanam cāru-hāsa-nirikṣaṇam.
su-bhṛūnnasam cāru-karṇam su-kapolā'rupādharām.. 10.39.47*

handed, the eight-handed and even the thousand-headed—were remodelled in the light of the details that have entered into the formation of the *Bhāgavata* conception of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu.

This standard form found its culmination when grandeur and beauty mingled with the metaphysical elevation of Viṣṇu. We have already noticed that emphasis on the protective aspect of Viṣṇu (which, as the vital principle of life, Viṣṇu really is) has played a great role in his anthropomorphic transformation. As protection is the specific commitment of a king, he (the king) is conceived to be the assembly of parts (*mātrās*) of the protectors of directions (*loka-pālas*).⁴⁶ If, then, the protectors of directions themselves form a part (the arms) of Viṣṇu then Viṣṇu is the king of kings, the monarch (*mahā-rāja*). Viṣṇu's majesty (*bhaga*) thus manifests itself through his protective faculty; and, this faculty, in the process of its unfoldment, brought in its train all the grandeur and beauty that shaped the personality of Viṣṇu. But in spite of the earnest longing on the part of the religious mind to create its pet idols, the all-embracing Reality, which Viṣṇu basically is, can never be exhausted by human imagination. Paradoxically speaking, human imagination grasped this inexhaustible character of Viṣṇu. It therefore rearranged the diversity of Viṣṇu against the background of his basically non-dual character. It was in a way an evaluation of the entire evolutionary process involved in the shaping of Viṣṇu. The evaluation asserted the old *Upaniṣadic* position that Reality is possessed of forms and is formless as well.⁴⁷ This meant that Viṣṇu as the transcendental Reality was left to his native nature while all the diversifying forces are eliminated from his being. Yet, as the all-embracing Reality, Viṣṇu was the meeting point of both the unity and the wealth of diversity. The *Bhāgavata* conception of the *Vaikunṭha-pati* represents this summit of the Viṣṇu concept.

In the land of light (*Vaikunṭha-dhāman*) the sovereign Personality (*mahā-rāja*) of the four-handed Viṣṇu is seated on the

⁴⁶ *raṅsārtham asya sarvasya rājānam asṛjat prabhuk.
indrānila-yamārkaṇām agneś ca varuṇasya ca.
candra-viṭteśayot caiva mātrā nir-hṛtya śātvatīḥ.*

Manu-Saṁhitā 7.3-4.

⁴⁷ *due vāva brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtam caivā'mūrtam ca* BU 2.3.1.

hood of the thousand-headed serpent, *Ananta*. As the emblem of his sovereignty, stands the white canopy over his head and he is being fanned from both sides.⁴⁸ The diversity, which Viṣṇu is, arranges itself into a grand hierarchy and is engrossed in the praise of Viṣṇu with appropriate dance and music. First of all his *Mahiman* (majesty) divided into eight forms (*aṇi-man*, *laghiman* etc.) stands closest to him. Then come his eight powers *Śrī* etc.,⁴⁹ his *Mahā-vibhūtis*.⁵⁰ Next to them stand his material powers *Ajā* (*Prakṛti*) etc.⁵¹ called his *Vibhūtis*.⁵² Next to them are *Kāla*, *Karman*, *Svabhāva* that help in creation, including material desire—all called *Śaktis*. Then appear the twentyfour categories,⁵³ that emanate from *Ajā*. Last in the row stand the rest of creation down to the clump (*stamba*).⁵⁴ Parallel to this hierarchy of objectivity stands its subjective counterpart in another order. His favourite *Pārṣadas* (attendants) *Nanda* etc.,⁵⁵ the *Brahmarṣis* (eternally God-filled souls) like *Sanaka* etc., the outstanding gods like *Indra* etc.,⁵⁶ the *Devarṣis* (celestial souls that have attained liberation by the practice of spiritual means) like *Nārada* etc., *Bhāgavatottamas* (the great human devotees) like *Prahlāda*, *Viśvakṣena* etc., come in one after the other row. Nay, even his

⁴⁸ *pārīva-bhramad-vyajana-cāmara-rāja-hamsaḥ
śvetātāpatra-śaśinoparirajyamānaḥ*. . . 4.7.21cd.

⁴⁹ The eight divine powers are:—

Śrī (beauty), *Puṣṭi* (nourishment), *Gir* (speech), *Kānti* (lustre), *Kīrti* (fame), *Tuṣṭi* (self-complacency), *Ilā* (enjoyment) and *Ūrja* (strength). 10.39.55 ab.

⁵⁰ Śrīdhara explains the term "*mahā-vibhūti*" appearing in 3.28.26 as "*Mahā-lakṣmī*" i.e., *Śrī*, the first of the eight divine powers. All the eight powers may therefore be called "*mahā-vibhūtis*".

⁵¹ The material powers are:—

Vidyā (knowledge), *Avidyā* (ignorance) and *Māyā* (primordial matter). 10.39.55cd.

⁵² The *Bhāgavata* calls these "*vibhūtis*" 10.13.52.

⁵³ Śrīdhara on 10.13.52 calls the twentyfour categories as "*śaktis*".

⁵⁴ Śrīdhara does not seem to give any separate name for *Kāla*, *Karman* etc. as he is silent over the designation of the gross creation down to the clump. The term "*śakti*" used by Śrīdhara for the twentyfour principles may be extended to cover these as well.

⁵⁵ *Nanda* etc. are nine:—

*Nandaṁ sunandaṁ garuḍaṁ pracaṇḍaṁ caṇḍaṁ eva ca.
mahā-balaṁ balañ caiva kumudaṁ kumudekṣaṇam*. . . 11.27.28.

⁵⁶ Eight or four protectors of directions. The *Bhāgavata* mentions nine gods in 10.40.53. This number may be achieved by the addition of *Durgā* to the eight gods in 11.27.29.

weapons⁵⁷ have assumed forms and joined the congregation.⁵⁸

The *Bhāgavata* with its characteristically metaphysical approach explains the huge mass of symbols heaped upon the conception of Viṣṇu, in the light of its own conception of the structure of Reality. The precious jewel *Kaustubha* occupying the most prominent place in the body of Viṣṇu is his self-luminosity (*ātma-jyotis*), the state of non-dual consciousness that forms the very core of Viṣṇu. Śrī on the left chest and Śrī-vatsa on the right chest are the radiance (*prabhā*) of non-dual consciousness, the first representing Viṣṇu's native power (*ātma-śakti*) and the second his divine splendour. *Vana-mālā*, hanging against Viṣṇu's body is *Ātma-māyā*, the principle of heterogeneity. He is clothed in the garment of the *Vedas* (*chandas*). The garment is yellow in so far as the *Vedas* have prescribed the path of action stimulated by *Rajas* whose colour is yellow. The sacrificial thread is the mystic syllable "Om" which is the nucleus (*sūtra*) of the *Vedas* (*brahman*). The pair of ear-rings are the *Sāṃkhya* and the *Yoga* thoughts that have thrown light upon the concept of Viṣṇu. As *Vairāja-Puruṣa*, Viṣṇu possesses his physical crest in *Brahma-loka* (*satya-loka*). The state of isolation marked by the effacement of diversity (*avyākṛta*), on which Viṣṇu is settled as *Vaikunṭha-pati* (the Great Master free from all limitations), is the serpent *Ananta* (infinity). Among the weapons white lotus stands for pure matter (*viśuddha-sattva*), the club for cosmic life (*mukhya-prāṇa*, *hiranya-garbha*), the source of all material

⁵⁷ *sunanda-nanda-pramukhaiḥ sva-pārśadaiḥ cakrādibhir mūrti-dharair nija'yudhaiḥ. puṣṭyā śrīyā kīrtiyajayā'kḥilarddhibhir niṣevyamānaṁ parameṣṭhināṁ patim..* 10.89.56.

⁵⁸ *ātmā'di-stamba-paryantair mūrtimadbhiḥ carā'caraiḥ. nṛtya-gītā'dyanekārthaiḥ prthak prthag upāsītāḥ.. apimādyair mahimabhir ajā'dyābhir vibhūtibhiḥ. catur-vimśatibhis tattvaiḥ paritā mahad-ādibhiḥ. kāla-svabhāva-saṁskāra-kāma-karma-guṇā'dibhiḥ. sva-mahima-dhvasta-mahibhir mūrtimadbhir upāsītāḥ..* 10.19.31-53.
sunanda-nanda-pramukhaiḥ pārśadaiḥ sanakādibhiḥ. sureṣair brahma-rudrādyair navabhiḥ ca dvijottamaiḥ.. prahlāda-nārada-vasu-pramukhair bhāgavatottamaiḥ. stūyamānaṁ prthag bhāvair vacobhir amalā'tmabhiḥ.. 10.39.53-54.
 Dark Viṣṇu with four arms and associated with deities and hermits is identified by T. A. Gopinath Rao as the *Yoga-variety* (*yoga-sthānaka-mūrti*); the "uttama" class (*Elements of Hindu Iconography Vol. I — Part I, Madras 1914 p. 80*).

activities, the conch-shell for water-element to which it belongs, the radiant wheel for the fire-element and the dark sword for the element of ether. The covering shield is ignorance (*Avidyā*) that hides the true nature of Reality. Time is the bow (*dhanus*) that sets the arrows viz, the sense-organs in motion, steeped in the quiver of action. The mind is the chariot so far as it holds Viṣṇu and this chariot is differentiated into the five elements, the basis of gross creation, because out of the speculation (*vikalpa*) of mind, the nucleus of matter is brought into existence. The gestures (*mudrās*) by Viṣṇu's hand suggest that as the protector he is always ready to give blessings (*vara*) and discard fear (*abhaya*) from the minds of his votaries. The altar of the Viṣṇu-worship is the solar disc and spiritual initiation (*dīkṣā*) is the purification of mind. The lotus at hand symbolises his majesty (*mahiman*). The pair of chowries (*cāmara*) are Viṣṇu's righteousness (*dharma*) and fame (*yaśas*) and the white canopy is the *Vaikunṭha-dhāman*. The vehicle *Garuḍa* is the three *Vedas* that carry Viṣṇu who himself stand for sacrifice (*yajña*). His eightfold majesty stands for his favourite attendants and Viṣvakṣena etc. are the presentations of the *Tantras*.⁵⁹

We come across interpretations of the symbols also in the

⁵⁹ *kaustubha-vyapadesena svā'tma-jyotir bibhartiyajāḥ.
tat-prabhā vyāpinī sākṣāc chrivatsam ursorā vibhuḥ..
sva-māyām vana-mālā'khyām nānā-guṇa-mayīm dadhat.
vāsas chandomayaṁ pītaṁ brahma-sūtraṁ tri-urt-svaram..
bibharti sāmṁkhyām yogaṁ ca devo makara-kunḍale.
mauliṁ padamṁ pārameṣṭhyām sarva-lokā'bhayamkaram..
avyāktam anantā'khyam āsanam yad adhiṣṭhitāḥ.
dharma-jñānā'dibhir yuktam sattvaṁ padmam ihocyate..
ojāḥ-saho-bala-yutaṁ mukhya-tattvaṁ gadāṁ dadhat.
apām tattvaṁ dara-varaṁ tejas-tattvaṁ sudarśanam..
nabho-nibhaṁ nabhas-tattvaṁ asirṁ carma tamo-mayam.
kāla-rūpaṁ dhanuḥ śārigaṁ tathā karma-mayeṣudhim..
indriyāṇi śarāṇ āhur ākūṭir asya syandanam.
tanmātrāṇyasyā'bhiyakiṁ mudrayā'rtha-kriyā'tmatām..
maṇḍalam deva-yajanaṁ dīkṣā-saṁskāra ātmanaḥ..
paricaryā bhagavata ātmano durita-kṣayaḥ..
bhagavān bhaga-śabdā'rthaṁ līlā-kamalam udvahan.
dharmaṁ yaśaś ca bhagavāns cāmara-vyajane'bhat..
ātapatṛaṇ tu vaikunṭham divjā dhāmā'kuto'bhayam.
tri-urd-vedaḥ suparṇā'khyo yajñaṁ vahati pūruṣam..
anapāyini bhagavati śrīḥ sākṣād ātmano hareḥ.
viṣvakṣenaṁ tantra-mūrtir viditāḥ pāṇḍadā'dhīpaḥ..
nandā'dayo'stau dvāḥ-sthāś ca te'nimādyā harer guṇāḥ..*

*Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*⁶⁰ and the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*.⁶¹ The variation of interpretations in spite of their affinity in some cases suggests that current terms were construed according to the practical need of propounding a particular outlook on Reality. Nevertheless such interpretations often bring out faithfully the implications of ancient passages in a brilliant fashion. For example, both the yellow garment and the vehicle *Garuḍa*, have been stated by the *Bhāgavata* to symbolize the three *Vedas*. In doing so, the *Bhāgavata* takes due cognizance of the tradition, recorded in the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā*,⁶² that looks upon fire as a bird (*garutmat*) embodying the three *Vedas*. Elsewhere, the *Bhāgavata* upholds the same tradition.⁶³ In the process of differentiation of ideas, fire connected with the act of sacrificing assumed the symbol of yellow garment while *Garuḍa* was conceived as the embodiment of the three *Vedas*. On the other hand, variation of interpretation is reflected in the meaning of the wheel, for instance. It is *fire* for the *Bhāgavata*, *mind* for the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and *wind* for the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*.

Viṣṇu has been conceived by the *Bhāgavata* in different situations. One should contemplate, so the *Bhāgavata* recommends, the form of *Viṣṇu* as moving (*vrajantam*), or seated (*āsīnam*) or reclined (*śayānam*) or clinging to the heart of man (*guhā-śayam*).⁶⁴ *Viṣṇu* moves in the worlds on his vehicle *Garuḍa*. *Garuḍa*, as we have seen, is either fire or the three *Vedas*. In so far as sacrificial fire ensures for the sacrificer the attainment of the three worlds, by the satisfaction of *Viṣṇu*, entailed by pouring oblations on fire, *Viṣṇu* as *Yajña-puruṣa* has his vehicle viz, fire which he uses for the protection of the three worlds in which his devotees live. Similarly, *Viṣṇu* rides on the three *Vedas* as their only import (*tātparya*) and spreads

⁶⁰ VP 1.22.68-81.

⁶¹ VD 3.85.17-20.

⁶² *suparṇo'si garutmaṁs, tri-vṛt te śro, gāyatraṁ cakṣur, bṛhad-rathāntare pakṣau. stoma ātmā, chandāmśi aṅgāni, yajūṁśi nāma. sāma te tanur vāmadevyam, yajñā yajñīyam puccham, dhīṁ yāḥ śaphāḥ. suparṇo'si garutman divaṁ gaccha svaḥ pata..* VS 12.4.

⁶³ *tadā sva-prabhayā teṣāṁ dyotayantyā diśo daśa. muṣṇaṁ teja upānīta tārkyeṇa stotra-vājinā..* 4.7.19. Vide also 6.8.29.

⁶⁴ *sṭhitaṁ vrajantam āsīnam śayānam vā guhāśayam. prekṣaṇīyehitaṁ dhyāyec chuddha-bhāvena cetasā..* 3.28.19.

himself out in the three worlds meant for the performers of Vedic duties. So, when Viṣṇu moves in the three worlds *Garuḍa* serves as his vehicle. If, on the other hand, we invoke the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* tradition that, as we have already noticed, conceives *Puruṣa* residing in the solar disc and if the solar disc in that sense is taken to carry *Puruṣa*, then Viṣṇu, the *Puruṣa*, rides on the sun conceived by the *Ṛg-Veda* as a bird, as we have already noticed. Viṣṇu is seated on *Ananta* and this is the form of *Vaikunṭha-pati*. *Ananta* stands for infinitude and so *Ananta* is conceived to be a big serpent with one thousand hoods.⁶⁵ Apparently the *Bhāgavata* invokes here the form of the thousand-headed *Puruṣa* of the *Ṛg-Veda* to give the impression of infinity. Grounded in his infinite nature Viṣṇu *per se* is free from all material limitations (*Vaikunṭha-pati*). Viṣṇu is described as a baby lying on the bed of the leaf of a banyan seedling (*nyagrodha-pota*).⁶⁶ This is the form of Viṣṇu when cosmic deluge has taken place. If we recall how springing from an insignificant banyan seed the giant of a banyan tree spreads out roots from the trunk into the soil below, we should be able to appreciate this conception of Viṣṇu. Baby Viṣṇu is the power of animation that lies in the nucleus of matter which eventually grows into worlds. Lastly, Viṣṇu resides in the heart of man. The *Bhāgavata* visualizes heart as a lotus which blooms into eight petals with a pericarp (*karnikā*) at the centre. The pericarp is distributed into three hierarchical regions—the land of the sun, the land of the moon and the land of fire. The summit, the land of fire, holds

⁶⁵ *tasmin mahā-bhogam anantam adbhutam
sahasra-mūrdhanya-phaṇā-maṇi-dyubhiḥ.
vibhṛājamānam dvi-guṇekṣpolbanam
sitā'calā'bham hṛti-kaṇṭha-jihvam..
dadarśa tad-bhoga-sukhā'sanam vibhum
mahā'nubhāvam puruṣottamottamam..* 10.89.53,54ab.

⁶⁶ *nyagrodha-potaṁ dadṛśe phala-pallava-sobhitam.
prāg-uttarasyām śākhāyām tasyā'pi dadṛśe śiṣum.
śayānam patra-putake grasantam prabhayā tamaḥ..* 12.9.20cd, 21.
The word "nyag-rodha" literally means rooting out (*rodha*=*roha*) downwards (*nyak*). The *Bhāgavata* has preferred this word to convey the idea of the emergence of the world from Viṣṇu.

the form of Viṣṇu, the standard four-handed Personality.⁶⁷

These four forms of Viṣṇu may be said to have satisfied the human urge to see the first principle of life (*Paramātmān*) in terms of creation and also in terms of spiritual attainment. The baby Viṣṇu is the starting point of creation; and, while the worlds have come into existence through cosmic evolution, Viṣṇu pervades all with the help of his vehicle, *Garuḍa*. When man becomes fed up with the trifles of materialism, he shuts himself up in the depth of his heart to discover therein the Great Master, the all-pervasive Reality which penetrates all—Nature as well as man's mind. The inward vision gradually helps man to get rid of his mundane costume consisting of his gross and subtle bodies; and, finally, with the disappearance of the veil of ignorance (*Avidyā*) man enters the portals of the promised land, the golden realm of knowledge and bliss to be awakened to the sovereignty of Lord Viṣṇu (*Vai-kunṭha-pati*) perpetually reposed on his infinite and sequestered loneliness.

From the practical point of view the *Bhāgavata* recognises the utility of all the forms. Duties become worship when one discovers the all-pervasive Reality through every detail of his performance. This outlook dedicated to the materialistic conception of Viṣṇu crystallizes mind on which then dawns the spiritual form of Viṣṇu, which finds its highest fulfilment in transcendental Infinity symbolized in the concept of the Lord of *Vai-kunṭha-dhāman*, the second grade of Reality.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *hṛt-puṇḍarikam antaḥ-sīhaṁ ūrdha-nālam adho-mukham. dhyātvordha-mukham un-nidram aṣṭa-patram sa-karṇikam karṇikāyāṁ nyaset sūrya-somā'gnin uttarottaram.. vahnī-madhye smared rūpaṁ mamaitad dhyāna-maṅgalam. samam praśāntam sumukham dīrgha-cāru-catur-bhujam..*

11.14.36-37.

⁶⁸ *sampracaratsu nānā-yāgeṣu viracitā'ngi-kriyeṣu apūrvam yat tai kriyā-phalam dharmā'khyam pare brahmaṇi yajña-puruṣe sarva-devatā-līṅgānām mantrāṇām artha-niyāmakatayā sāṅgāt kartari para-devatāyām bhagavati vāsudeva eva bhāvayamāna ātma-naiṣṭhura-mṛdita-kaṣāyo haviṣṭvadharyubhir gṛhyamāneṣu sa yajamāno yajña-bhājo devāṁ tām puruṣā'vayaveṣu abhyadhyāyat.. evam karma-viśuddhyā viśuddha-sattvasya'ntar-hṛdayā kāśa-śarīre brahmaṇi bhagavati vāsudeve mahā-puruṣa-rūpopalakṣaṇe śrīvatsa-kaustubha-vaṇamālā'si-dara-gadā'dibhir upalakṣite nija-puruṣa-hṛt-likhite'nā'tmani puruṣa-rūpeṇ virocāmāna uccaistaram bhaktir anudin-nam edhamāna-rajā'jāyata.. 5.7.6-7.*

MAHĀ-MĀYĀ (ŚRĪ OR VIṢṆU-MĀYĀ)

We have noticed that Lord Viṣṇu is the ancient god of chivalry. A great fighter for a noble cause against the forces of evil, Viṣṇu with his budding youth exposes quixotic characteristics. In the earlier literature and thought the martial character of Viṣṇu receives due recognition. He is "*tri-vikrama*"⁶⁹ i.e., the maker of three great strides and is an esteemed friend of Indra⁷⁰ in his expedition against the giant *Vṛtra*. He is armed, for the purpose, with the blowing conch-shell, the rolling wheel and the fierce club.⁷¹ The lotus does not find here any place because Viṣṇu is then the war-god through and through.

But the sun, the prototype of the Viṣṇu concept, is not merely a brilliant reality dispelling the forces of darkness with its own light radiating from its disc symbolised in the conch-shell and the rolling wheel. With its dynamic creativity it heralds as well the influx of beauty condensed into peace and prosperity. Viṣṇu therefore combines in him "a youth vast in body who is no longer a child".⁷² His insuperable beauty had evoked the prayer for having a male child with the most beautiful form of Viṣṇu.⁷³ Viṣṇu is invoked for promoting conception.⁷⁴ *Savitṛ* is said to be the origin of all.⁷⁵ Viṣṇu's identification with *Savitṛ* fulfils the aim of his beauty—the achievement of all that is good and auspicious. Viṣṇu thus emerged from his earlier martial character to embody youth, beauty and creativity.

Parallel to this development of Viṣṇu arose the concept of Śrī or *Lakṣmī*, first recorded in the *Śrī-Sūkta*.⁷⁶ Her being

⁶⁹ *vicakramāṇas tredhorugāyaḥ*. RV 1.154.1.

⁷⁰ *athā'bravīd vṛtram indro hanīṣyan sakhe viṣṇo vitarāṃ vi kramasva*
RV 4.18.11.

⁷¹ *yatra tad viṣṇur mahīyate narāṇām adhipatim*
yatra śāṅkha-cakra-gadā-dhara-smaraṇam.

Khila-Sūkta 20 at the end of the ninth *Maṇḍala*.

⁷² *bṛhac-charīro vimimāṇa ṛkkabhir yuvā kumārāḥ pratyetyāhavam*.
RV 1.155.6.

⁷³ *viṣṇoḥ śreṣṭhena rūpeṇā'syām nāryām gavīnyām*.
pumāṃsam putrānū dhehi daśame māsi sūtave...

Khila 34 after RV 10.184

⁷⁴ *viṣṇur yonim kalpayatu* RV 10.184.1

⁷⁵ *Savitā vaktavyaḥ*:—... *Sarvasya prasavitā* ... *Yāska* 10.31.

⁷⁶ *Śrī-Sūkta*, *Khila* 11 at the end of the fifth *Maṇḍala*.

was culled from the moon (*candrā*) and the sun (*sūryā*). She inherited from the moon beauty and charm and from the sun brilliance and creativity. She thus possesses golden colour (*hiranya-varṇā*) on the one hand, while on the other she is self-luminous (*prabhāsā*). As the principle of creativity she represents all that is best—fame (*kīrti*), nourishment (*puṣṭi*), self-complacency (*tṛptām*), provision for the enjoyment of others (*tarpayanti*), power (*durādharṣā*) besides her soothing beauty (*Śrī*) and sweetness (*kānti*). As the embodiment of liquid beauty, *Lakṣmī* is wet (*ādrā*) and as prosperity incarnate she is permanently settled on the lotus (*padme sthitā*). As a personality of unique beauty she is destined to be the ideal beloved as she is to be universal mother (*mātṛ*) because of her free creativity.

As we have already noticed, by the time of the *Śatapatha-Bṛāhmaṇa*, *Śrī* becomes the daughter of *Prajāpati*. This new fact adds to the character of *Śrī*. *Prajāpati*, the *Hiranya-garbha*, is said to have generated sound, as we shall see later on. *Śrī* thus becomes identified with sound (*śabda* or *gir*). By the time of the *Baudhāyana-dharma-sūtra*, as stated before, she becomes an object of worship.

Thus both *Viṣṇu* and *Śrī* stood for beauty and creativity. They could not therefore remain apart. So, if *Viṣṇu* was fire (sacrificial) *Śrī* was his flame (*piṅgalā—Śrī-Sūkta*). The *Bhāgavata* takes into account the original characters of *Viṣṇu* and *Śrī*, viz, the sun and the sun-cum-moon respectively, that make *Viṣṇu* resting on the bosom of the sea, and *Lakṣmī* or *Śrī* rising from the womb of the sea respectively. The *Bhāgavata* then proceeds to describe the origin of *Ramā* (the beloved of *Viṣṇu*) as follows:—In course of the churning of the sea appeared *Ramā*, the incarnation of beauty and prosperity. Like lightning at the crest of the crystal hill, she saturated all directions with the radiance of her beauty. Her birth was hailed with universal acclamations from gods, demons and men—all enthralled by her beauty, elegance, youth and colour. She was given a grand reception, was washed and was decorated, with appropriate music and dance. Then, with a lotus garland in her hand she moved in the congregation of all living beings of different orders in search of her matching husband. She em-

ployed her selective mind and at long last her choice fell upon Lord Viṣṇu, the eternal reservoir of all qualities and no demerits, permanently settled on his disinterested isolation. As a befitting reward for her choice she was installed permanently right on the left bosom of Viṣṇu. Thus Viṣṇu and *Ramā* became universal parents.⁷⁷

The coalescence of Viṣṇu and *Ramā* or *Śrī* meant the unity of static existence and perpetual dynamism. In other words, beauty was reduced to truth and creativity remained to explain the world-process. While Viṣṇu as Truth is the transcendental reality, *Śrī* as creativity is the subtle germ of the universe, that gradually unfolds its unimpeachable delusive nature. *Śrī*, as the elusive power of Viṣṇu (*Viṣṇu-māyā*), unravels herself as the sacrifice, or rather the totality of action, while Viṣṇu enjoys the fruits thereof. The universe is the manifestation of *Śrī* while

*tataś cā'virabhūt sākṣāc chrī ramā bhagavat-parā.
rañjayanti diśaḥ kāntiā vidyut saudāmanī yathā..
tasyām cakre sphāṁ sarve sa-surā'sura-mānavāḥ.
rūpaudārya-vayo-varṇa-mahimā'kṣipta-cetaśaḥ..
tasyā āsanam ānīnye mahendro mahad adbhutam.
mūrtimatyaḥ saric-chreṣṭhā hema-kumbhair jalām śuci..
ābhīṣecanikā bhūmīr āharat sakalauśadhiḥ.
gūvaḥ pañca pavitrāṇi vāsanto madhu-madhāvau..
rṣayaḥ kalpayāncakrur abhiṣekam yathā-vidhi.
jagur bhadraṇi gandharvā natyaś ca nanytur jaguḥ..
meghā mṛdaṅga-paṇava-murajā'naka-gomukhān..
vyanādayan śaṅkha-veṇu-vināś tumula-nisvanān..
tato'bhiṣicur devīm śriyam padma-karām satim.
dig-ibhāḥ pūrṇa-kalasaiḥ sūkta-vākyair dvijeritaiḥ..
samudrāḥ pīta-kauśeye vāsasī samupāharat.
varuṇaḥ srajām vaijayantiṁ madhunā matta-ṣaṭ-padām..
bhūṣaṇāṇi vicitrāṇi viśva-karmā prajāptiḥ.
hāraṁ sarasvatī padmām aśo nāgaś ca kuṇḍale..
tataḥ kṛta-svastayanotpala-srajām
nadad-dvirephām pari-grhya pāninā.
cacāla vaktram su-kapola-kuṇḍalam
sa-vriḍa-hāsaṁ dadhati su-sobhanam..
vilokayanti nir-avadyam ātmanah
padam dhruvam cā'vyabhicāri-sad-guṇam.
gandharva-siddhā'sura-yakṣa-cāraṇa-
traipīṣṭapeyā diṣu nā'nvindata..
evam vimṛśyā'vyavicāri-sad-guṇair
varam nijaikāśrayatayā guṇāśrayam.
bavre varam sarva-guṇair apēkṣitam
ramā mukundaṁ nir-apēkṣam īpsitam..
tasyāḥ śriyas tri-jagato janako jananyā
vakṣo-nivāsam akarot paramaṁ vibhūteḥ.
śrīḥ svāḥ prajāḥ sa-karūṇa nir-ikṣaṇena
yatra sthūtaidhayata sādhipatims tri-lokān.. 8.8.8-17, 19, 23, 25.*

Viṣṇu helps the process of manifestation and at every step enjoys the inner beauty of manifestation. Śrī transforms herself into gross and subtle bodies and Viṣṇu serves as the soul thereof. Śrī represents names and forms and Viṣṇu is ineffable consciousness.⁷⁸ The elusive character of Śrī deludes the individual souls (*Jivas*) to be caught up in the stream of worldliness leading to the effacement of their transcendental reality.⁷⁹ But when the entire universe is resolved into Viṣṇu, the supreme soul (*Paramātmān*), spiritual equilibrium is restored by the reinstatement of the isolated nature of Viṣṇu shining against the cosmic deluge.⁸⁰

Viṣṇu as the *Puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* possessed majesty (*mahimān*) which subsequently becomes eightfold (*aṣṭaman*, *laghiman* etc.). The absorption of Śrī into the essence of Viṣṇu further enriched Viṣṇu's personality which in its turn gave impetus to the differentiation of Śrī so that Viṣṇu's association with Śrī could be grasped in sumptuous variety and colour. The different facets of Śrī, as recorded in the *Śrī-Sūkta*, assumed individuality under the stress of the process of differentiation so that eventually, parallel to his eightfold majesty, Viṣṇu possessed eight powers (*Mahā-vibhūti*)—Śrī and seven others—nourishment (*puṣṭi*), speech (*gir*), sweetness (*kānti*), fame (*kīrti*), self-complacency (*tuṣṭi*), enjoyment (*ilā*) and power (*ūrjā*).⁸¹ In so far as all the seven powers emerged from Śrī by the process of differentiation, Śrī heads the list of these powers and is recognised to occupy the most prominent place among all. When Viṣṇu developed into *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa*, as we have already seen, and *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa*'s potencies correspondingly increased to infinite number, Śrī still maintained her unique prominence. The *Bhāgavata* records how Kṛṣṇa had disappeared from the presence of all *gopīs* with the exception of one who

⁷⁸ yuvān tu viśvasya vibhū jagataḥ kāraṇaṁ param.
iyaṁ hi prakṛtiḥ sūkṣmā māyā-śaktir duratyayā..
tasyā adhiṣṭarāḥ sāksāt tvam eva puruṣaḥ paraḥ.
tvam sarva-yajña ijjeyaṁ kriyeyaṁ phala-bhug bhavān..
tvam hi sarva-īśarīryātmā śrīḥ īśarīrendriyā'īśayaḥ.
nāma-rūpe bhagavati pratyayas tvam apāśrayaḥ.. 6.19.11-13.

⁷⁹ 11.3.1-16.

⁸⁰ 12.9.11-31.

⁸¹ śrīyā puṣṭyā girā kāntyā kīrttyā tuṣṭyelayorijyā.
vidyayā'vidyayā śaktyā māyayā ca niṣevitam.. 10.39.55.

was especially privileged to accompany Kṛṣṇa. One can readily recognise in the *gopīs* (derived from the root “*gop*”, to protect) the protective forces of Viṣṇu. When *gopīs* were appropriated by the *Bhāgavata* to delineate the blissful nature of *Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa*, the eight powers of Viṣṇu pursued Kṛṣṇa. Their special position found due recognition in the concept of eight girl friends (*aṣṭa-sakhīs*); and, among the eight, Śrī was still the most favourite. Later on, Śrī developed into *Śrī-Rādhā*.

From the metaphysical point of view, Śrī is not merely a “*Mahā-vibhūti*” but is the very core of Viṣṇu’s substance. If Viṣṇu is the Lord of isolation (*kaivalya-pati*), Śrī is his consciousness of unity, as the *Śrī-Sūkta* has properly recorded (*so’smi-tā*). As the knowledge of unity, Śrī has transcended all duality. She again is the transcendental impulse that transforms itself into spiritual diversity providing for the weapons, the ornaments and other signs of Viṣṇu.⁸² She is, further, the material universe. Yet, through all shines the fundamental character of Viṣṇu, permanently settled on his pristine glory of non-duality.

VAIKUNṬHA-DHĀMAN

The conception of *Vaikunṭha-dhāman*—the state of existence free from worldly limitations (*kunṭhā*)—sprang from a different construction of the term “*padā*”, viz, “abode”. The *Puruṣa-Sūkta* referred⁸³ to the immortal abode (*amṛta pada*) situated in heaven (*divi*). The *Rg-Veda* further calls it supreme (*parama*) and finds it glowing like an extensive (*ātata*) eye (*cakṣus*) in heaven.⁸⁴ This supreme abode is also stated to contain the eternal source of honey.⁸⁵ But when this immortal, shining and blissful region is stated to be *supreme*, naturally this description seems to imply less exalted abodes of Viṣṇu. In the wake of the *Rg-Veda*, the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* throws useful light on this issue when it records three abodes of Viṣṇu

⁸² *yathakātmyānubhāvānām vikalpa-rahitaḥ svayam. bhūjaṇā’yudha-līṅgā’khyā dhatte śaktiḥ sva-māyayā..* 6.8.32.

⁸³ *tri-pād asyā’mṛtaṁ divi* RV 10.90.3.

⁸⁴ *tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam sadā pakṣyanti sūrayaḥ diviva cakṣur ātatam..* RV 1.22.20.

⁸⁵ *viṣṇoḥ parama pade madhva utsaḥ.* RV 1.154.5.
idam viṣṇur vicakrame tredhā nidadhe padam samūdham asya pāmsūre RV 1.22.17.

spread out in the universe.⁸⁶ The *Chândogya-Upaniṣad* rescues earlier thought from the vagary of the three regions, when it describes heaven to be the third region from the earth (*itah*). Ācārya Śaṅkara brings out the implication of this passage by his remark that heaven is the third in relation to the other two regions—the earth and the aerial space.⁸⁷ So, in the light of Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *Chândogya-Upaniṣad*, the three abodes of Viṣṇu recorded in the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā*, are the earth, the aerial region and the heaven. Of the three, the *Rg-Veda* would recommend the heaven to be the best in that it is the immortal land of light and bliss.

When earlier thought located the supreme abode in heaven and found it shining, naturally attention was directed to the vast body of luminaries in search of this supreme abode. The *Bhāgavata* started enquiry from the sun because it was the nucleus that differentiated into the three worlds.⁸⁸ Along the path of the gods (*deva-yāna*) the *Bhāgavata* penetrated through the sun and then came upon the pole star (*dhruva*) in which the sun was grounded.⁸⁹ The *Bhāgavata* proceeded farther to discover "*śiṣu-māra-cakra*", as the basis of the pole star.⁹⁰ According to the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* this region is attainable by child-like simplicity (*śiṣu*) and is relatively immortal (*amṛta*) in that it is destructible (*māra*) only at the cosmic deluge.⁹¹ The *Bhāgavata* therefore conceives it as the abode of Viṣṇu. It may further be taken as a wheel or rather the axle of a wheel round which revolves the grand galaxy of stars and constellations in-

⁸⁶ VS 5.15.

⁸⁷ *brahma-loke tṛtīyasyām ito divi* Ch U 8.5.3.
Śaṅkara comments on the term "*tṛtīya*" as follows:—
bhuvam antarikṣam cāpekṣya tṛtīyā dyauḥ.

⁸⁸ *sūryeṇa hi vibhajyante diṣaḥ khaṁ dyaur mahi bhīdā.*
svagāpavargau narako rasaukāṁsi ca sarva-śaḥ... 5.20.45.

⁸⁹ The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* gives a clear picture of the path:—
ādhāra-bhūtaḥ savitur dhruvo muni-varottama.
dhruvatya śiṣumāro'sau so'pi nārāyaṇātmakaḥ... VP 2.9.23.

⁹⁰ *yasya (śiṣumārasya) pucchāgre dhruva upakṣiptaḥ...* 5.23.5.

⁹¹ *te'samprayogā lobhasya maithunasya ca varjanāt.*
ityebhiḥ kāraṇaiḥ buddhāḥ te'mṛtatvaṁ hi bhejire.
ā-bhūta-saṁplavaṁ sthānam amṛtatvaṁ vibhāṣyate.
trailokya-sthūti-kālo'yaṁ a-punar-māra ucyaṭe... VP 2.8.93ab, 94cd, 95.

cluding the sun and the moon.⁹² So, the abode of Viṣṇu is the great centre that unites and lends light to the innumerable luminaries in heaven. Beyond the three worlds, this abode of Viṣṇu endowed with its innate splendour⁹³ has been deemed as the goal of spiritual life.⁹⁴

The *Brāhmaṇa* period marked improvement upon the earlier concept of the supreme abode. The *Ṛg-Vedic* god Indra, with his tremendous power and indefinite character, emerged now as the supreme god; and, by the time of the *Āitareya-Brāhmaṇa*⁹⁵ his eminence was recognised on all hands. As the best of gods, because of his power, vigour, tolerance and other qualities, Indra was installed to sovereignty (*sāmrājya*). He was placed on an altar (*āsandī*) which his glory (*yaśas*) as its cover, and beauty and prosperity (*śrī*) as its pillow (*upavarhaṇa*). The *Mantra* with which he was sprinkled with holy waters suggested that he now incorporated the person of Varuṇa (another mighty god of the *Ṛg-Veda*) as well. Gods from all directions—east, west, north, south, centre (*dhruva*) and above—sprinkled him and Indra was installed to the highest status (*parameṣṭhin*) and became the root of all creation (*prajāpatya*).

During the period of the *Upaniṣads* earlier words were imbued with new connotations, to fit in with the philosophical doctrines that were gaining ground against the sacrificial cults holding their sway so far. One of the earliest *Upaniṣads*,

⁹² *su-dur-jayaṁ viṣṇu-padam jitaṁ vrayā
yat sūrayo'prāpya vicakṣate param.
ātiṣṭha tac candra-divākara'dayo
graharkṣa-tārāḥ pariyanti dakṣiṇam..* 4.12.25.

⁹³ *yad bhrājamānaṁ sva-rucaiva sarvato
lokās trayo hyanu vibhrājanta ete.
yan nā'vrajan jantuṣu ye'nanugrahā
vrajanti bhadrāṇi caranti ye'niṣam..* 4.12.35.

⁹⁴ *anāsthitam te pitṛbhir anyair ayyaṅga karhicit.
ātiṣṭha jagatām vandyam tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam..
tri-lokiṁ deva-pānena so'tivrajya munin api.
parastād yad dhruva-gatir viṣṇoḥ padam atha'bhyagāt..* 4.12.26,34.

⁹⁵ *te devā abruvant sa-prajāpatikāḥ:—ayam vai devānām ojiṣṭho
balīṣṭhaḥ sahiṣṭhaḥ sattamaḥ pārayiṣṭutamaḥ, imam eva'bhiśiñcāmaha
iti... tasmā etam āsandiṁ samabharan... yaśa āstaraṇam, śriyam upa-
varhaṇam.. niṣāda dhṛta-vrato varuṇaḥ... āsandyām āsinam prajā-
patiḥ purastāt... abhyasiñcat — imā āpa śivatamā ityetena tṛcena
... sa parameṣṭhi prajāpatyo'bhavat. AīB 8.3.1-3.*

the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* adopted this method. The *Upaniṣad* adduced the apology that words do not mean what they appear to, because the gods are fond of indirect description. Thus "Indra" meant just 'the bright'.⁹⁶ The same line of thinking was followed by the *Aitareya-Upaniṣad*. The *Upaniṣad* repeated almost verbatim the same logic as adduced by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* to uphold the view that "Indra" means 'Paramātman' in that "in" (*idam*) denotes "this" and "dra" (*adarśam*) denotes "saw". Thus *Paramātman*, the cosmic witness, is figuratively called Indra.⁹⁷ The *Bhāgavata* also takes due cognizance of this indirect way in which a *Vedic* truth is promulgated.⁹⁸

But in this development of thought, one is confronted with conflicting ideas. The *Hiraṇya-garbha-Sūkta*⁹⁹ declares that *Hiraṇya-garbha* was the principal *Prajāpati* out of whom creation was brought into existence. The *Aitareya-Bṛahmaṇa*, on the other hand, claims, as we have noticed above, the same status for Indra who, according to the *Aitareya-Upaniṣad*, is no other than *Paramātman*. Now, *Hiraṇya-garbha* being a part of creation cannot be identical with *Paramātman* who creates all including *Hiraṇya-garbha*. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* seems to have anticipated this inconsistency when, by way of solution, it has recognised the aspect of Reality immanent in creation to be *Hiraṇya-garbha* and its transcendental aspect to be *Paramātman*.¹⁰⁰

For the *Chāndogya*, then, the highest abode of Indra, described by the *Aitareya-Bṛahmaṇa*, was the region of *Hiraṇya-garbha*, briefly called "*Brahma-loka*". As the two sovereign

⁹⁶ *indho ha vai nāmaṣa yo'yaṁ dakṣiṇe'kṣaṇ puruṣaṣ taṁ vā etaṁ in-dhaṁ santam indra ityācakṣate. parokṣaṇaiva, parokṣapriyā iva hi devāḥ pratyakṣa-dviṣaḥ.. BU 4.2.2.*

⁹⁷ *etaṁ eva puruṣaṁ brahma tatatamam apāyam idam adarśam iti. tasmād idandro nāmedandro ha vai nāma, tam idandram santam indra ityācakṣate parokṣaṇa. parokṣa-priyā iva hi devā parokṣa-priyā iva hi devāḥ.. Ai U 1.3.14.*

Śaṅkara comments: *indro nāma paramātmā*

⁹⁸ *bārhiṣman etad adhyātmaṁ pāroṣyaṇa pradarśitam.*

yat parokṣa-priyo devo bhagavān viśva-bhāvanah.. 4.28.65.

vide also 11.3.44, 4.29.59.

⁹⁹ *Hiraṇya-garbhaḥ samavartatāgre RV 10.121.1.*

¹⁰⁰ *hantā'ham... anena jīvenātmanā'nupravīṣya nāma-rūpe vyākaraṇāṇi. Ch U 6.3.2.*

gods—the brilliant god Indra and the water-god Varuṇa—had enriched the personality of Viṣṇu, the *Paramātmān*, whose material character Hiraṇya-garbha or Brahmā represents, the conception of *Brahma-loka* as found in the *Chāndogya* incorporates some of the elements of Indra, Varuṇa and Viṣṇu, besides drawing upon the idea of “*araṇya*” (forest) in which penance is prescribed in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* for obtaining *Brahma-loka*.¹⁰¹ The *Chāndogya* describes that *Brahma-loka* contains a couple of lakes, as large as seas, of which one is called “*ara*” and the other is called “*nya*”. It has further a tank (*saraḥ*) replete with food (*irā*) and ecstasy (*mada*). There is then a fig-tree (*aśvattha*) that constantly breeds nectar (*soma*). In that *Brahma-loka* stand the invincible (*a-parājitā*) citadel (*pūr*) of Brahmā and the golden hall (*hiraṇmaya*) of the Lord (*prabhu*).¹⁰²

“*Aranya*” (forest) of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* is being construed here by the *Chāndogya* as a couple of seas. The association of water with Viṣṇu¹⁰³ and Varuṇa¹⁰⁴ might have influenced the *Upaniṣad* to interpret the word in that light. The word “*iram-mada*” means the flash of lightning attended with the falling of the thunderbolt. Reminiscent of the close association of such a phenomenon with Indra, the word however has undergone radical overhaul of meaning to denote a *tank* full of food and pleasure corresponding to the spring of honey (*madhva utsaḥ*),¹⁰⁵ situated in the high abode of Viṣṇu. The fig-tree as well is a concrete embodiment of the same spring of honey in that it is constantly given to discharging honey. The citadel stands for the material vesture of Reality which however is particularly concentrated in its golden hall.

The *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad* knits all the earlier fragments of thought, formulated by and conveyed through the *Vedas*, the

¹⁰¹ *ye cā'mi aranye śraddhām satyaṁ upāśate... tām vaidyutām puruṣo manasā etya brahma-lokaṁ gamayati* BU 6.2.15.

¹⁰² *te'tha yad aranyāyaṇam ityācakṣate brahmacāryam eva tat. araś ca ha vai nyaś cā'rṇavau brahma-loke tṛtiyaśyām ito divi. tad airaṁ madiyaṁ saras, tad aśvatthaḥ soma-savanas, tad aparājitā pūr brahmaṇaḥ, prabhu-vimītaṁ hiraṇmayam.* Ch U 8.5.3.

¹⁰³ *tad aśya priyam abhi pātho aśyām* RV 1.154.5.

¹⁰⁴ *ĀiB* 8.3.2.

¹⁰⁵ *viṣṇoḥ pade parama madhva utsaḥ..* RV 1.154.5.

Brāhmaṇas and the earlier *Upaniṣads*, into a consistent story and presents the same in a way that strikes a balance between a reproduction of old ideas and interesting innovations. When a person is fit for entering the *Brahma-loka*, so begins the *Upaniṣad*, a large number of heavenly girls (*apsarases*) approach him with fruits, ointments, garlands, vestments and powdered aromatics in their hands. They then adorn him with the adornment of *Brahmā*.¹⁰⁶ He then comes to the lake (*hrada*) called "ara". Then he enters the region of moments (*muhūrtas*). From there he proceeds to *Yeṣṭihās*. Then before crossing the river called *Vijarā* (ageless) he leaves behind him his merits and demerits. Having crossed it he comes across the tree of food (*ilya*) wherefrom divine smell (*brahma-gandha*) enters his nostrils. From there he moves on to the city (*samsthāna*) abounding with large trees grown on the banks of the different types of water reservoirs (*śāla-jya*). Here the flavour of *Brahmā* enters him. Then, he reaches the invincible (*aparājita*) palace (*āyatana*) of *Brahmā*. Here he catches the lustre (*tejas*) of *Brahmā*. Then, passing the pair of doorkeepers—*Indra* and *Prajāpati*—he moves on to the hall of *Brahmā*, that bears the stamp of his individuality (*vibhu-pramita*). Here he acquires the glory (*yaśas*) of *Brahmā*. In that hall he visualises *Brahmā* seated on the altar (*āsandī*) of intellect (*prajñā*) in the bed (*paryanka*) of inexhaustible vigour i.e., life (*prāṇa*), sustained by beauty (*śrī*) and food (*irā*). A couple of wives, *Mānaśī* (mind) and *Cākṣuṣī* (literally, the eyes; the external organs) are always at his bidding. *Brahmā* further possesses abundance of flowers (worlds), the Mothers (the *Vedas*) and little mothers (*ambāyavī*) and heavenly girls (*apsarases*).

When he intended to ascend that bed of *Brahmā*, the latter wanted to know his credentials. The person answered: You and I are one and the same. *Brahmā* questioned: What am I? Out came the answer: You are the Truth (*satya*), the grand unity of the transcendental called "sat" and the imma-

¹⁰⁶ *taṁ pañca-śatānyapsarasāṁ pratiyanti : śataṁ phala-hastāḥ, śataṁ āñjana-hastāḥ, śataṁ mālya-hastāḥ, śataṁ vāso-hastāḥ, śataṁ cūrṇa-hastāḥ. taṁ brahmā laṁkāreṇā laṁkurvanti.* Kau U 1.3.

nent called "tya". This supreme knowledge entitled him to the highest status, the supreme self.¹⁰⁷

The ideas which seem to have influenced the *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad* in its conception of *Brahma-loka* are like these: If materialism is not the goal of man, he has to cast off his material vesture before he can attain divinity. He has to transcend for this purpose the space-time scheme that holds on to materialism. Entrance to the threshold of divinity is marked by the touch of divine beauty which the celestial damsels stand for. They furnish him with equipments appropriate for the spiritual journey. His journey starts from the lake or stream (*hrada*) of ever-changing materialism (*ara*).¹⁰⁸ He moves on to the larger units of time (*muhūrtas*). He discovers in the fleeting shadows of materialism the reflection of his own mind, the propensity that (*yā*) chooses to satisfy itself through material pleasures and thus kills (*han*) his spirituality (*iṣṭi*).¹⁰⁹ Before his divine light of meditation, the shadows of materialism disappear. Consequently merits and demerits wither away. Having abandoned all material stuff, he leans out into the river of time to reach the other bank, the timeless region. On the other bank stands the tree of "manna" (*irā*) that provides spiritual nourishment to

¹⁰⁷ *sa etarṁ deva-yānam panthānam āpadya.. brahma-lokam (āgacchati). tasya ha vā etasya lokasyā'ro hrado, muhūrtā, yeṣṭihā, vijarā nadi, ilyo vṛkṣaḥ, śāla-jyaṁ samsthānam, aparājitam āyatanam, indra-prajāpati dvāra-gopau, vibhu-pramitam, vicakṣaṇā'sandī amitaujāḥ paryāṅkaḥ, priyā ca mānasi, pratirūpā ca cākṣuṣī, puṣpāṇyāvayatau vai ca jagāni, ambāi cāmbūyaviṣ cā'psaraso, ambayā nadyah.*

sa āgacchati ilyaṁ vṛkṣam, tam brahma-gandhaḥ praviṣati. sa āgacchati śāla-jyam samsthānam, tam brahma-rasaḥ praviṣati. sa āgacchati aparājitam āyatanam, tam brahma-tejaḥ praviṣati. sa āgacchati indra-prajāpati dvāra-gopā, tāvasmād apadravataḥ. sa āgacchati vibhu-pramitam, tam brahma-yaśaḥ praviṣati. sa āgacchati vicakṣaṇām āsandim... sā prajñā, prajñayā hi vipaśyati. sa āgacchati amitaujasam paryāṅkam, sa prāṇas, tasya ... pādau śrīṣ cerā ca... tasmin brahmā'ste. tam ittham-vit pādenaivā'gra ārohati, tam brahmā pṛcchati— ko'siti? tam pratibhūyāt:— ṛtur asmi... tvam ātmā'si, yas tvam asi so'ham asmi. tam āha— ko'ham asmi. satyam iti brūyāt. kim tat yat satyam iti? yad anyat devebhyaḥ ca prāṇebhyaḥ ca tat sat, atha yad devāḥ ca prāṇas ca tat tyam. ... sa ya brahmaṇo jitiḥ .. tam jayati.. ya evaṁ veda. Kau U 1.3-7.

¹⁰⁸ "ara" is a tiny division of time, also known to the Jains.

¹⁰⁹ "yeṣṭihā" = *yā + iṣṭi + hā*, that which kills sacrifice. The *Upaniṣads* have used the term "*kāma*" (the material urge) to denote the same (vide, for example, BU 4.4.7).

compensate his material impoverishment. Here for the first time he obtains the direct apprehension, the *smell* of Brahmā. Vitalized with it, he marches on to the city enriched with all sorts of beauties impressive by their colossal structure. Gradually he moves on to the centre—the royal palace guarded by Indra and Prajāpati; for, the path of divinity (*deva-yāna*) lies beyond the region of Indra and the region of Prajāpati. Blessed with the lustre of Brahmā, he enters the royal hall and finally discovers Brahmā, the cosmic soul, reclined on intelligence and life, both of which constitute the essence of the principle of *Mahat*.¹¹⁰ *Mahat* is the source of the mind and the external organs and the worlds spread out of and shrink into the essence of *Mahat*. The *Vedas* and wisdom are associated with Brahmā, the Hiranya-garbhā. The *Bhāgavata* also recognises *Mahat* to be the abode of Viṣṇu in that Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu is revealed in the heart of man, that (heart) constitutes the individualistic form of *Mahat*.¹¹¹

But Brahmā being the immanent aspect of Reality, his abode viz, *Mahat* does not contain absolute truth. So, beyond the land of Brahmā lies the absolute abode, the realm of the Transcendental, the *Paramātmān*, in which one finally enters with the help of the highest knowledge, the integral vision of non-duality.

The *Bhāgavata* has elaborated and sometimes remodelled the earlier ideas of the abode of Viṣṇu to draw up a magnificent picture of *Vaiṣṇu-dhāman*, the highest region of *Vaiṣṇu*. The *Vaiṣṇu-dhāman* is endowed with an outer garden (*vana*) called *Naiṣṭhreyasa*. It is liberation (*kaivalya*) incarnate, and has the privilege of simultaneous revelry of all the six seasons, bursting upon the trees that fulfil all desires. In the heart of water, bloom vernal flowers that pour their elixir of fragrance in the minds of all including the divine songsters singing in praise of Lord Viṣṇu, in the company of matching women. Birds of innumerable variety raise a tumultuous symphony; but, it is silenced the moment the lyrical hum of the bees is tuned to the laudation of Viṣṇu. The grandeur

¹¹⁰ *tebhyah samabhavat sūtram mahān sūtreṇa samyutaḥ* 11.24.6ab.

¹¹¹ *yat tat saṁśā-guṇam svaccham jñātam bhagavataḥ padam.
yad āhur vāsudevā khyam cittam tan mahad-ātmakam...* 3.26.21.

of different flowers submits to the exalted position of *Tulasī* that the Lord has chosen for his adornment. Abounding in golden chariots with precious jewels and women with explosive beauty and captive smile, *Vaikuṇṭha-dhāman* still does not stimulate baser feelings.

In the royal palace of Viṣṇu, of golden structure and crystal floor, moves *Śrī*, the beloved of Viṣṇu, with a lotus in her hand and jingling anklets at her feet. Her pure and beautiful form is reflected on the crystal floor to give rise to the illusion that she is cleansing it with a broomstick to demonstrate her unqualified service to the Lord. By the pool replete with nectarine water with emerald banks, is located the pleasure garden of *Śrī*. During worship of the Lord with *Tulasī*, her beautiful face, interspersed with locks of hair and marked by a sharp nose, is mirrored in the pool and appears to be aptly rewarded by the Lord.¹¹²

At the door of the Lord's palace stand a couple of door-keepers with clubs in their hands. They are dark, of equal age and have ornaments and flowers similar to those of the Lord. The seventh chamber at the door of which they are

¹¹² yatra naiḥśreyasaṁ nāma vanam kāmā-dughair drumaiḥ.
sarvartu-śrībhir vibhrajat kaivalyam iva mūrtimat..
vaimānikāḥ sa-lalanāś caritāni śaśvad
gāyanti yatra śamala-kṣapaṇāni bhartuḥ.
antar-jale'nuvikasan-madhu-mādhavinām
gandhena khaṇḍita-dhiyo'pyanilam kṣipantaḥ..
pārāvata'nyabhṛta-sārasa-cakravāka-
dātyūha-haṁsa-śuka-tittiri-barhiṇām yaḥ.
kolāhalo viramate'cira-mātram uccair
bhrīgā'dhipe hari-kathām iva gāyamāne..
mandāra-kunda-kurabakot-pala-campakā'rṇa-
punnāga-nāga-bakulāmbuja-pārijātāḥ.
gandhe'rcite tulasikā'bharṇena tasyā
yasmims tapāḥ sumanaso bahu mānayanti..
tat saṁkulaṁ hari-padā'nati-mātra-dṛṣṭair
vaidurya-mārakata-hema-mayair vimānaiḥ.
yeṣāṁ bṛhat-kaṭi-taṭāḥ smita-śobhi-mukhyaḥ
kṣṇā'tmanām na raja ādadhur utmayā'dyaiḥ.
śrī rūpiṇi kvaṇayati caraṇā'ravindam
lilāmbujena hari-sadmani mukta-doṣā.
saṁlakṣyate sphatikā-kuḍya upeta-hemni
sammārjati va yad-anugrahaṇe'nya-yatnaḥ..
vāpīṣu vidruma-taṭeṣvamaḷā'mṛtā'psu
preṣyā'nvitā nija-vane tulasibhir īlam.
abhyarcati svalakam unnasam ikṣya vaktraṁ
uccheṣitam bhagavatetyamatāṅga yac-chriḥ..

3.15.16-22

Vide also 2.9.10-17.

stationed opens into the royal hall¹²² where, as we have already noticed, is seated Viṣṇu, the *Paramātman*, on the hood of *Ananta*, with all his grandeur and the grand congregation assembled to his service. They have all assumed the four-armed form of Viṣṇu, in fact, everything exactly the same excepting *Śrīvatsa* and *Kaustubha*, the exclusive possessions of the Lord. Of these, sixteen are his most favourite including the two door-keepers, Nanda and Sunanda.¹²⁴

One can trace here the earlier concepts and their adaptations by the *Bhāgavata*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* describes how a person gains brilliant hue when passed through the ordeal of spiritual sacrifice (meditation) effected by divine powers,¹²⁵ with the elimination of all his earthly impurities. The "*araṇya*" of the *Chāndogya* is appropriated here in the sense of a forest (*vana*) and its name "*Naiḥśreyasa*" is a clear indication that it is the region of liberation, the *summum bonum* of all spiritual aspirations. The divine minstrels and their maidens are the elaboration of the "*apsaras*" concept of the *Kauṣītaki*. The smell of vernal flowers can also be traced to the same source in its concept of "*brahma-gandha*". Birds and bees have emerged from the concepts of the reservoirs of water and flowers of the *Rg-Veda* and the *Kauṣītaki* respectively. The golden chariots with rare jewels are the transformation of the concept of "*deva-yāna*", the path of the gods, associated with flame (*arcis*). The golden palace of Viṣṇu with crystal floor are from the ideas of the *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa*. The location of the royal hall at the seventh chamber suggests that the realm of Viṣṇu has transcended the range of time, marked by six seasons. The two door keepers, Nanda and Sunanda, correspond to Indra and Prajāpati the two door-keepers of Brahmā, as recorded in the *Kauṣītaki*. The emblems of sovereignty of Lord Viṣṇu, such as the white canopy, the bed of

¹²² *tasminn atītya munayaḥ ṣaḍ asaḥjamānāḥ
kakṣāḥ samāna-vayasāvatha saptaṁyām.
devāvacaḥkṣata gṛhita-gadāu parārdhya-
keyūra-kunḍala-kirita-viṣaṅka-veśau.* 3.15.27 vide also 4.12.20.

¹²⁴ *praticyām diśyabhūd āviḥ śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-dharaḥ.
ātma-tulyaiḥ ṣoḍaśbhīr vinā śrīvatsa-kaustubhau.* 6.9.28cd, 29ab.

¹²⁵ *etasmin agnau devāḥ puruṣaṁ juhvati, tasyā āhutyai puruṣo bhāsva-
varṇaḥ sambhavati.* BU 6.2.4.

Ananta, the mammoth gathering of all beings, are elaborations of the grandeur of Brahmā, as found in the *Kauṣītaki*, while the concept of sovereignty itself is derived from the *Aitareya-Brahmaṇa*. Last, but not the least, is the concept of *Tulasī* that replaces the gigantic fig-tree (*aśvattha*) of the *Chāndogya*.

It appears from the general tempo of description that while the *Bhāgavata* has brought the exuberance of poetic effusion to bear upon the majesty of Lord Viṣṇu, it subdues all restlessness, vanity, tumult and the firework of gorgeous exhibition to sublime tranquillity crowned by Lord Viṣṇu as supreme religion (*vr̥ṣa*).¹¹⁶ The mellow light of beauty and peace suffuses the entire atmosphere with the consequent dedication of all trifles at the altar of the Lord. A land of unabated spiritual ovation with the torch of non-dual consciousness ever ablaze, the *Vaikuṇṭha-dhāman* of the *Bhāgavata* fulfils the unsatisfied urge of man to enter the Transcendental from the land of limitations, including the exalted abode of Brahmā, the cosmic soul.

The three abodes of Viṣṇu thus take on new significance in the *Bhāgavata*. The first of these is *Śiśu-māra-cakra*, that lies beyond and yet serves as the basis of the three worlds. The second is the *Mahat*, the first material nucleus of both the gross and the subtle. The third is the Transcendental, the eternal land of light, that stands for the highest spiritual value.

VIŚUDDHA-SATTVA

The *Prakṛti* of the *Sāṃkhya* School is made of tripartite elements viz, *Sattva*, the element of revelation, *Rajas*, the element of activity, and *Tamas*, the element of darkness. All worldly existences exhibit the combination of these three elements in varying degrees and proportions. This combination is the constant character of the three powers. In other words, the three elements of *Prakṛti* are inextricable from one another. Therefore, if spiritual advancement means increase in the proportion of *Sattva* it cannot thereby mean the total elimination of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. So, wisdom (*viveka-khyāti*) of the *Sāṃkhya* School may at best mean the highest expansion of *Sattva* with

¹¹⁶ *yatra cā'dyaḥ pumān āste bhāgavān chabda-gocarāḥ.
sattvaṁ viṣṭabhya vi-rajam svānām no mṛdayan vr̥ṣaḥ.* 3.15.15.

Rajas and *Tamas* reduced to their minimum. The *Yoga*-system of Patañjali also could not supersede this limitation of *Sattva*. A crystallized intellect of a successful *Yogin* may at best remain almost as pure as the soul in which the *Rajas* and the *Tamas* elements pale into insignificance.¹¹⁷

The *Bhāgavata* conceives pure matter to account for the spiritual region as well as the spiritual body of Reality. While the world is apparently full of miseries, the spiritual region is stated to be free from them and is full of bliss. Similarly, while the worldly body is subject to afflictions and death, the spiritual body that enables the liberated soul to participate in the eternal ovation, is immune from such limitations. So, while the world of *Prakṛti* has the elements of restlessness and delusion, another matter has to be conceived to provide for both the spiritual region and the spiritual body. This spiritual matter is "*viśuddha-sattva*" or pure matter.

Pure matter is *Sattva* marked by the total absence of *Rajas* and *Tamas*.¹¹⁸ It is interesting to observe the kinship of pure matter with impure matter i.e., *Prakṛti*. This is indicated by the *Bhāgavata* which puts in the mouth of Brahmā the following words: "I have been created by *Sattva* which constitutes the dear body of the Lord. Yet I do not know the mystery of Truth, not to speak of others who have been made by *Rajas* and *Tamas*."¹¹⁹ Now, *Sattva* mentioned in the verse along with *Rajas* and *Tamas* deserves to be considered as an element of *Prakṛti*. Yet the adjunct—"that which constitutes the dear body of the Lord"—makes this *Sattva* absolutely pure i.e., free from the association of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. It appears from such description that the conception of pure matter is an outgrowth of the original idea of *Sattva* usually related to *Rajas* and *Tamas*.

¹¹⁷ On the *Sūtra* 3.55 of Patañjali, the *Vyāsa-bhāṣya* comments:—
yadā nirdhūta-*rajas-tamo-malam* buddhi-*sattva*m puruṣasyā'nyatā-
pratyaya-mātrā'dhikāraṁ dagdha-kleśa-bijaṁ bhavati, tadā puruṣasya
buddhi-sārūpyam ivā'pannam bhavati.

¹¹⁸ pravartate yatra *rajas tamas* tayor
sattvaṁ ca miśraṁ na ca kāla-vikramaḥ.
na yatra māyā kim utā'pare harer
anuvratā yatra surā'surā'rcitāḥ. . 2.9.10.

¹¹⁹ ime vayan yat-priyayaiva tanvā
sattvena sṛṣṭā bahir antar āviḥ.
gatiṁ na sūkṣmāṁ ṛjayaś ca vidmahe
kuto'surā'dyā itara-pradhānāḥ. . 8.5.31.

It was imagined that *Sattva* could, after all, reach the stage of perfection when it was divested *completely* of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Such thought was encouraged by the idea that if there could be a state when *Rajas* and *Tamas* could be reduced to their minimum, then it was only another step forward to eliminate them altogether from the pale of *Sattva*.

The conception of pure *Sattva* is vital to the doctrine of *Vaiṣṇava* salvation. The salvation of the *Sāṃkhya* and the *Yoga* consists in the final isolation of the individual soul from the association of *Prakṛti*. Wisdom by which such a state is obtained is also, according to them, a mode of *Prakṛti*, which at the exhaustion of the *Karman* by virtue of which the present physical body of the enlightened soul has been brought into being, eventually dissolves into *Prakṛti*. Thus, the individual soul continues for ever to remain isolated from worldly pleasure and pain. But such isolation is considered by the *Vaiṣṇavas* to be at best a release from the clutches of worldly sorrows and therefore a negative conception. A *Vaiṣṇava* would rather like to enter a spiritual region and participate in the pleasures of that blissful region of eternal life. To provide for such a concept of blissful state of existence, *Vaiṣṇavism* had to conceive pure matter as distinguished from impure matter i.e., *Prakṛti* of the *Sāṃkhya* School.

While pure *Sattva* is thus immune from *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the *Bhāgavata* has given it the status of being considered as a modification of *Yoga-māyā*. The *Bhāgavata* takes the eightfold majesty (*aṣṭa-mahā-siddhi*) like reduction to the atomic size, or reduction to the lightest measure etc. (*aṇiman, laghiman*) that pertain to God, to be the special characteristics of pure matter.¹²⁰ And, these features, as stated before, belong to *Yoga-māyā*. Therefore these majesties establish a link between *Yoga-māyā* and pure matter. And as *Yoga-māyā* is a dynamic power one may conceive pure matter to be a solidification of *Yoga-māyā*.

Pure matter provides for a body of the Absolute. The *Bhāgavata* calls this matter to be a shining jewel (*vasu-deva*)

¹²⁰ *bhagavān ... mahā-vibhūti-patiḥ ...
viśuddha-sattvaṃ dharma-jñāna-virāgyaiśvaryaḥ dyaṣṭa-
mahā-siddhyupalakṣaṇam ... sandhārayamāṇa ... āste ...
ātma-yoga-māyā-viracita-vividha-loka-yātrā-gopīthāya* 5.20.40-41

and *Bhagavān* being revealed through this is therefore called *Vāsudeva*.¹²¹ Such concretization of Reality, as refined and pure as it might possibly be, lends meaning to our worship whether for worldly pleasures or for salvation. Revealed through pure matter in a definite form, *Bhagavān* offers the results of our good acts.¹²² On the other hand he dispels the knowledge of plurality for a person aspirant of liberation, by defining himself in a particular form.¹²³ If we recall the hoary antiquity of image worship among the Hindus from the age of the *Rg-Veda*,¹²⁴ the conception of 'pure matter' by the *Vaiṣṇavas* as an explanation to the divine form of God, may be regarded as a valuable contribution in the sphere of religion and ethics, as well as in the field of metaphysics.

The Doctrine of Descent is also dependent upon this conception of "pure matter". While a Descent appears like an ordinary mortal in many respects, he is distinguished from the latter in that his intrinsic consciousness is always unclouded. This is because his form is spiritual as distinguished from the physical body of an ordinary mortal, made of tripartite energy of *Prakṛti*. The material which provides for the spiritual form of a Descent is "pure matter".¹²⁵

According to the *Vaiṣṇava* conception, a liberated soul proceeds to the spiritual region of Viṣṇu, called *Vaikuṇṭha*. Such a soul is conceived to have spiritual form corresponding

¹²¹ *sattvaṁ viśuddhaṁ varu-deva-labdhitam*
yad iyate tatra pumān apāṛytaḥ.
sattve ca tasmin bhagavān varu-deva
hyadhokṣajo me namaṣā vidhiyate.. 4.3.23

¹²² *sattvaṁ viśuddhaṁ brayate bhavān sthitau*
śarirīnām śreya-upāyanam vapuḥ.
veda-kriyā-yoga-tapaḥ-samādhibhis
tavārhanam yena janaḥ samihate.. 10.2.34

¹²³ *sattvaṁ na ced dhātār idam nijam bhavet*
viññānam ajñāna-bhidā'pamārjanam.
guṇa-prakāśair anumīyate bhavān
prakāśate yasya ca yena vā guṇaḥ.. 10.2.35

¹²⁴ RV 3.4.5 uses the word "nṛ-paśar" (having the form of man) to describe a Vedic deity; vide also the Journal of the German Oriental Society XXII. p. 587 ff.

¹²⁵ *bībhārṣi rūpāṇyavabodha ātmā*
kṣemāya lokasya carā'carasya.
sattvopapannāni sukhā'vāhāni
satām abhadrāṇi muhuḥ khalānām.. 10.2.29

to the spiritual form of Viṣṇu. "Pure matter" is said to build that body for the liberated soul.¹²⁶

Finally, the abode of Viṣṇu i.e., *Vaiṣṇava* is made of pure matter.¹²⁷ Hence the abode and corporal existence of souls therein are all made possible by the conception of pure matter. In short, the entire process of metamorphosis in *Vaiṣṇava* theology, which serves as the basis of its conception of salvation and diverse divine manifestations within the universe is hinged upon the idea of "pure matter". Reality of the devotees, whether within the universe or beyond it, is thus conceived in terms of "pure matter". It is the element which presents Truth in a concrete form without obscuring in any way its intrinsic nature. "Pure matter" is thus held to be self-luminous.¹²⁸ While thus worldly forms are evanescent, divine forms are real and true.

¹²⁶ *yam dharma-kāmā'rtha-vimukti-kāmā
bhajanta iṣṭām gatim āpnuvanti.
kiñcā'sto rātyapi deham'avyayam
karotu me'dabhra-dayo vimokṣaṇam..* 8.3.19

¹²⁷ *patni vikunṭhā subhrasya vaikunṭhaiḥ sura-sattamaiḥ.
tayoh' sva-kalayā jayite vaikunṭho bhagavān svayam..
vaikunṭhaḥ kalpito yena loka loka-namaskṛtaḥ.
ramayā prārthyamānena devyā tat-priya-kāmyayā..* 8.5.4-5

¹²⁸ *na tad vicitram khalu sattva-dhāmani
sva-tejasā yo nu purā'pivat tamah..* 7.8.24 cd

CHAPTER VI

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FIRST GRADE

BRAHMAN

Brahman is the first assertion of Truth against the transient cosmic process. It is the world-ground. Physical creation emerges from *Brahman*, is sustained by it and eventually dissolves into the essence of *Brahman*. To be the ground of the changing world-process, *Brahman* has no beginning, middle and end; it has no internality and externality.¹ It is the transcendental reality beyond the expressed (*vyakta*) and the potential (*avyakta*) forms which ultimately sink into the general background called *Brahman*.²

Intuition reveals *Brahman* as the reality comparable to the continuum of ether (*ākāśam iva kevalam*), the all-comprehensive, undifferentiated and self-luminous *being* without any reference to individuality.³ It is a stretch of consciousness in which there is apparently no sensible diversity of feature, no preference, no differential incidence of subjective regard. As consciousness pure and simple, *Brahman* has counteracted the insistence of the flow of tripartite energy (*tri-guṇa*) by its innate splendour⁴ and is settled in its native essence which is a challenge to all differential incidence.⁵ God (*Śiva*) and primordial matter (*Śakti*) postulate this non-differential background whose

¹ na yasyā'dyantau madhyaṁ ca svaḥ paro nāntaram bahiḥ.
viśvasyāmūni yad yasmād viśvaṁ ca tad itam mahat.. 8.1.12

² labda-brahmātmānaḥ tasya vyaktā'vyaktā'tmanah paraḥ.
brahmā'vabhāti vitato nānā-śaktyupabṛmhitaḥ.. 3.12.47

³ tvam hi brahma param jyotir gūḍham brahmaṇi vānmaye.
yam paśyantyamalā'tmāna ākāśam iva kevalam.. 10.63.64

⁴ tvam toāṁ ahaṁ brahma param pumāṁsam
pratyak-srotasyātmani samvibhāvyam.
sva-tejasā dhvasta-guṇa-pravāham
vande viṣṇuṁ kapilam veda-garbham.. 3.33.8

⁵ jyotiḥ param yatra rajas tamaś ca.
sattvam na yad brahma nirasta-bhedam.. 8.7.31 cd

sovereignty over the cosmic process is unquestionably established by its non-dual nature.⁶

Though *per se* *Brahman* is limitless, non-dual, immutable and primeval being, it is the reservoir of diverse, heterogeneous and even contradictory potencies. *Brahman* is therefore the immediate moment and the explanation of the universe of bewildering diversity.⁷ The Law of Causality which binds the individual units of the universe into a harmonious system operates against the background of *Brahman* which imbues the details of the universe with meaning and rationality.⁸ Non-duality of *Brahman* is therefore to be interpreted as the non-differentiation when the diverse energies of *Brahman* are lulled into inactivity. *Brahman* may be characterised by that state, before creation started. The *Bhāgavata* describes such a state as the repose of *Brahman* upon its sweet will.⁹

When the cosmic process begins, *Brahman*, the ultimate source of plurality, pronounces itself as time, destiny and the other conditions of the cosmic process. They emerge out of *Brahman* through the play of *Māyā* and are again sunk into *Brahman* when spiritual insight penetrates the veil of limited knowledge.¹⁰ By insight, the universe composed of the individual soul (*ādhyātmika*), its body (*ādhibhautika*) and the environment (*ādhidāivika*), is reduced to *Brahman*, the ultimate background of all diversity.¹¹ When the creative process is in

⁶ jāne tvām iṣaṁ viśvasya jagato yoni-bījayoḥ.
śakteḥ śivasya ca paraṁ yat tad brahma niranṭaram..
tvam eva bhagavann etac chiva-śaktyoḥ sa-rūpayoḥ.
viśvaṁ sṛjasi pāsyatsi kṛdān ūṛṇa-paṭo yathā.. 4.6.42-43

⁷ yasmin viruddha-gatayo hyaṇiṣaṁ patanti
vidyādayo vividha-śaktayo ānupūrvyā.
tad brahma viśva-bhavam ekam anantaṁ ādyaṁ
ānanda-mātram avikāram ahaṁ prapadye.. 4.9.16

⁸ tvam brahma paramaṁ guhyaṁ sad-asad-bhāva-bhāvanam.
nānā-śaktibhīr ābhātas tvam ātmā jagad-īśvaraḥ.. 8.7.24

⁹ bhagavān eka āśedam agre ātmā'tmanāṁ vibhuḥ.
ātmecchānugatāvātmā'nānā-matyupalakṣaṇaḥ..
mene'santam iṣā'tmānaṁ supta-śaktir asupta-dṛk. 3.5.23, 24 cd

¹⁰ ayan tu śākṣād bhagavāns tryadhīṣaḥ
kūṣa-sṭha ātmā kalayā'vatirṇaḥ.
yasminn avidyā-racitaṁ nir-arthakaṁ
paśyanti nānātvam api pratītam.. 4.16.19 vide also 10.63.25-26

¹¹ ābhāsaḥ ca nirodhaḥ ca yato'styadhyavasīyate.
sa āśrayaḥ paraṁ brahmā paramātmēti śabdyate..
yo'dhyātmiko'yaṁ puruṣaḥ so'sāvevādhidāivikaḥ.
yas tatrobhaya-vicchedaḥ puruṣo hyādhibhautikaḥ.. 2.10.7-8

action *Brahman* serves as the abode of all beings¹² and inanimate objects.¹³ By the inexplicable law of its own, *Brahman* thus plays the world drama; and, when it plays the drama out it once again falls back against itself as the only residuum.¹⁴ *Brahman* is thus existence, pure and simple, against the fleeting shadows of creation and is permanently charged with the potentiality of creation, which acts and reacts, at regular intervals, against the immutable background, the *Brahman* (*kṣara*) of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*.

ĀTMA-MĀYĀ

One might recall that under the urge of Divine Sport *Yoga-māyā*, which itself is the first outcome of Divine Sport, undergoes the process of differentiation, by the interaction of the two aspects of *Yoga-māyā*—*yoga* (divinity) and *māyā* (delusion). *Viṣṇu-māyā* represents the stage when the process of differentiation of these two aspects gets more pronounced with insistence on the *yoga*-aspect. That is why the sense of unity (*eko'ham*) rules over the knowledge of diversity at the stage of *Viṣṇu-māyā*; and, so, predominantly as the principle of divinity *Viṣṇu-māyā* ensures salvation i.e., a state of existence free from limitations (*Vaikuṇṭha-dhāman*). The process of differentiation is further accentuated when the predominance of divinity is replaced by equal claim of both *yoga* and *māyā*. This is the stage of *Ātma-māyā*, the divine will to be many (*bahu syām*).

Ātma-māyā then is the principle of diversity. Its varying manifestations baffle all predictions and outstep rational calculations.¹⁵ As static existence *Brahman* cannot explain the emergence of the universe composed of names and forms. *Ātma-*

¹² *yat paśyati na paśyantam cakṣur yasya na riśyati.
tam bhūta-nilayam devam supraṇam upadhāvata..* 8.1.11

¹³ *yasya kuṣāvidam sarvaṁ sā'tmam bhāti yathā tathā.
tat tvayyapiha tat sarvaṁ kim idam māyayā vinā..* 10.14.17

¹⁴ *sa viśva-kāyaḥ puru-hūta ilaḥ
satyaḥ svayaṁ-jyotir ajaḥ purāṇaḥ.
dhatte'sya janmā'dyajāyā'tma-śaktyā
tam vidyayodasya nir-īha āste..* 8.1.13

¹⁵ *yo hyātma-māyā-vibhavaṁ ca paryagād
vathā nabhasvāntam athā'pare kutah..* 2.6.36

māyā stands for dynamism in *Brahman*, that spins out of *Brahman* the cobweb of creation.¹⁶

Dynamism of Reality—whether *Yoga-māyā*, *Viṣṇu-māyā* or *Ātma-māyā*—seems to yield two facets, energy (*śakti*) and matter (*dravya*). In relation to *Yoga-māyā* the matter-aspect of *yoga* explains the creation of *Goloka* while the energy-aspect of *yoga* is visible in the conception of *gopīs*. *Māyā*-portion of *Yoga-māyā* is operative only in the producing of the ever-renewing enchantment involved in the association of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs*. In the sphere of *Viṣṇu-māyā*, pure matter, out of which *Vaikuṇṭha-dhāman* is brought into existence, and *Śrī* together with the other, potencies, noted above, represent respectively the matter and the energy aspects of *yoga* while *māyā* is confined to creating a picturesque halo round Viṣṇu in its conception of *Vaikuṇṭha-dhāman*. Thus both in *Yoga-māyā* and in *Viṣṇu-māyā* the *māyā*-aspect is reduced to its minimum while the *yoga*-aspect rules and transforms itself into a spiritual region and a potency through which Reality realises its urge of Divine Sport. Although in *Ātma-māyā* the emphasis on *yoga* is distributed equally between *yoga* and *māyā* and the balance between the two finds further expression in a sort of antagonism¹⁷ when *Ātma-māyā* gives rise to two contradictory powers, *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā*, yet the transformation of *Ātma-māyā* into energy and matter both with regard to *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā* remains intact. Thus the divine aspect of *Ātma-māyā* is visible as energy called *Cit-śakti* and also as matter (*viśuddha-sattva*) forming the pure bodies of the Descents (*avatāras*). Similarly *Māyā* is split up into *Avidyā* and *Prakṛti* of which the first works as the force of worldly life while the second operates as matter giving rise to the physical world. *Vidyā* is also produced from *Māyā* to counteract the force of *Avidyā*.

So, *Ātma-māyā*, the divine will inherent in *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality, behaves in different ways. It evolves into

¹⁶ *yathā'tma-māyā-yogena nānā-śaktyupabṛmhitam.*
vilumpan viṣṇan grhṇan bibhṛad ātmānam ātmanā.
kṛīḍasyamogha-samkalpa ūṣṇa-nābhīr yathorṇute
tathā tad-viṣayām dhehī manīṣām mayi mādḥava.. 2.9.26-27

¹⁷ *māyām vyudasya cit-chaktyā kaivalye sthita ātmani.* 1.7.23cd
bahu-rūpā ivā'bhāti māyayā bahu-rūpayā.
ramamāṇo guṇeṣvāsya māma'ham iti manyate.. 2.9.2

Māyā which puts up a show of manifoldness in the Non-dual when *Māyā* gives rise to the *guṇa*-reals. When delusion (*Avidyā*) brought about by *Māyā* deepens and the individual soul is caught between the prongs of "I and Mine" (*aham mama iti*)—the selfish motive—the individual soul is then plunged into the abyss of darkness and affliction.¹⁸ Thus *Māyā* not only brings about the physical existence, gross and subtle, but also clothes the soul with a physical form.¹⁹ Yet the soul can trace its way back to its basic nature by the operation of *Cit-śakti* which is equally vigilant within the cosmic process,²⁰ and which kindles *Vidyā* for the extinction of *Avidyā*, the evil force.

Thus *Ātma-māyā* provides both for the principle of bondage and the principle of release.²¹ As *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā*, these two principles operate in God. Or, these two principles may operate as *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* in the individual soul whose liberation is guaranteed when divine flame from *Cit-śakti* kindles *Vidyā* into super-consciousness resulting in the disappearance of *Avidyā*.²² Of the two principles, then, spirituality triumphs over materiality and *Ātma-māyā* thus serves the cause of Divine Sport to its further unfoldment.²³ The panorama of diversity never obscures the unitary vision.

¹⁸ *yaśmin viruddha-gatayo hyanīṣaṁ patanti
vidyā'dayo vividha-śaktaya ānupūrvyā..
tad brahma. 4.9.16 ab*

¹⁹ *yathā'tma-māyā-yogena bibhrad ātmānam ātmanā.. 2.9.26ad*

²⁰ *ātma-māyām ṛte brahman parasyā'nubhavā'tmanah.
na ghaṭetā'rtha-sambandhaḥ svapna-draṣṭur ivā'njasa.. 2.9.1*

²¹ *ekah sṛjati bhūtāni bhagavān ātma-māyayā.
eṣāṁ bandhaḥ ca mokṣaḥ ca sukhaṁ duḥkhaḥ ca niḥkalaḥ.. 6.17.21*

²² *vidyā-vidyē mama tanū viddhyuddhava śarīriṇām,
bandha-mokṣa-karī ādye māyayā me vinirmite.. 11.11.3*

²³ *yathā'tma-tantro bhagavān vikriḍatyātma-māyayā,
viṣṭīya vā yathā māyām udāste sākṣi-vad vibhukh.. 2.8.23*

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOCTRINE OF INCARNATION (EXPOSITORY)

When the *Rg-Vedic* seer had declared—"Who can exhaust the powers of Viṣṇu?—Not even one capable of counting the dust particles on the earth dares do it."¹—hardly did he realise that his declaration would provide a very fertile ground for creative imagination of posterity.² Indeed the *Bhāgavata* has exploited this *Rg-Vedic* idea to serve as the foundation of its illustrious Doctrine of Incarnation (*avatāra-vāda*).³ The importance of this Doctrine in the *Bhāgavata* cult cannot be over-estimated. The *Bhāgavata* starts with several questions all of which revolve round the Doctrine of Incarnation—the purpose of an Incarnation like Kṛṣṇa, the noble deeds an Incarnation performs, the religion which an Incarnation leaves to humanity through his teachings and performances as a sure guide, and so on.⁴ Through the length and breadth of the *Bhāgavata*, these questions have been answered in details so that the *Bhāgavata* can legitimately make the concluding remarks: "Thus the initial questions have been fully answered in that the extraordinary

¹ *viṣṇor nu kaṁ vīryāṇi pra vocaṁ
yaḥ pāṛthivāṇi vimame rajāṁsi.* RV 1.154.1.

² *viṣṇor nu vīrya-gaṇanaṁ katamo'rhatiḥ
yaḥ pāṛthivāṇyaṇi kavir vimame rajāṁsi.
gāyan guṇān daśa-satā'nana ādi-devaḥ
śeṣo'dhunā'pi samavasyati nā'sya pāram..* 2.7.40ab, 41cd.

³ *yāni yaṇiḥ karmāṇi yair yaiḥ svacchada-janmabhiḥ.
cakre karoti kartā vā haris tāni bruwantu naḥ..
yo vā anantasya guṇān aṇantān
anukramiṣyan sa tu bāla-buddhiḥ.
rajāṁsi bhūmer gaṇayet kathañcit
kālena naivā'khila-śakti-dhāmnah..* 11.4.1-2.

⁴ *sūta jānāsi bhadrāṁ te bhagavān sātvatāṁ patiḥ.
devakyāṁ vasudevasya jāto yasya cikīrṣayā..
tasya karmāṇyudārāṇi parigitāni sūribhiḥ.
brūhi naḥ śraddadhānānāṁ līlayā dadhataḥ kalāḥ..
kṛtavān kila karmāṇi saha rāmeṇa keśavaḥ.
atimarttyāni bhagavān gūḍhaḥ kapaṭa-mānuṣaḥ..
brūhi yogesvare kṛṣṇe brahmaṇye dharma-varmaṇi.
svāṁ kṣāṭhām adhunopete dharmāḥ kaṁ śaraṇaṁ gataḥ..*

deeds of Incarnations have received adequate treatment in the body of the work".⁵ Hence the Doctrine of Incarnation may be regarded as the central pivot round which revolve the other Theories of the *Bhāgavata* cult.

It may be recalled that non-dual consciousness (*advaya jñāna*) is the highest truth of the *Bhāgavata*.⁶ Under the spur of Divine Sport this supreme Reality, as characterised by *Yoga-māyā*, the first expression of the instinct of Divine Sport, is called *Bhagavān*, the all-blissful, the Kṛṣṇa of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. And, *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, is the primordial source of all Incarnations.⁷ By the intrinsic law of Divine Sport *Bhagavān* is differentiated into Viṣṇu, the second grade of Reality, and that into *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality, and finally that into *Puruṣa* (God). If an Incarnation is taken to be a partial representation (*Amśa*) of his original then *Puruṣa*, distant from *Bhagavān* by three degrees, may legitimately be described as "the part of the part of the part".⁸ But Divine Sport does not stop at *Puruṣa*. Untrammelled by the law of causality that necessarily involves time-sequence between the cause and the effect, Divine Sport proceeds to bring into existence the infinitesimal details of creation at the same instant. This means that Divine Sport starts its operation from the emanation of Viṣṇu from *Bhagavān* and finishes with the emergence of the grossest of the gross. The congregation thus brought about by a single stress in *Bhagavān* consists in *Prakṛti* and all its evolutes, the cosmic controllers that work behind the cosmic process (*loka-pālas*), God, the super-cosmic principles like Time and Nature, and also, *Brahman* and Viṣṇu—the

⁵ *iti cokatam dviija-lreṣṭhā yat pṛṣṭo'ham ihā'smi vaḥ.
lilā'vatāra-karmāṇi kirttitāniha sarvaśaḥ..* 12.12.46.

⁶ *visuddham kevalam jñānam pratyak samyag avasthitam.
satyam pūrṇam anādyantam nir-guṇam nityam advayam.* 2.6.40.

⁷ *yaśā'vatāra-karmāṇi gāyanti hyasmadādayaḥ.
na yaṁ vidanti tattvena tasmai bhagavate namaḥ..* 2.6.38.

⁸ *yaśā'mśā'mśā'mśa-bhāgena viśvotpatti-layodayāḥ.
bhavanti kila viśvā'tmaṁ tam tvā'dyā'ham gatim gatā..* 10.85.31.

transcendental Realities.⁹ The widest concept of Incarnation, envisaged by the *Bhāgavata* here, apparently embraces all expressions of *Bhagavān*—immanent and transcendent, sentient and insentient—all integrated by the law of Divine Sport into the grand unity of *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality.

If, however, an Incarnation be conceived in terms of immanence i.e., a descent of the Transcendental to the phenomenal state of existence and if such immanence is confined to a conscious principle working in close co-operation with the physical universe, then such a conception gives rise to the idea of the world-soul. *Puruṣa* of the *Bhāgavata* responds to this idea because He is the representation of *Bhagavān*, the Transcendental, within the physical universe, although He is directly traced to *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality¹⁰ and is also intimately connected with the physical universe which is taken to constitute the psycho-physical organism of God. So the *Bhāgavata* with its characteristically monotheistic approach has discovered God, also called *Puruṣa*, because of His permanent residence in the universe (*pura*). And the Doctrine of Incarnation has found fresh impetus with God as the first principle. In other words, God as the first immanence of the Transcendental (*ādyā'vatāra*) enjoys the exclusive privilege of serving as the perennial source of all Descents (*avatāras*) that from time to time emerge from God and having discharged their specific mission recede to Him again.¹¹ The *Bhāgavata* has given a long list of names of Descents that are expressly stated to have emerged from *Puruṣa*.¹²

⁹ *ādyo'vatārah puruṣaḥ parasya
kālah svabhāvaḥ sad-āsan-manaś ca.
dravyam vikāro guṇa indriyāṇi
virāṭ svarāṭ sthāṇu carīṇu bhūmnaḥ..
aham bhavo jajña ime prajāś
dakṣādayo ye bhavad-ādayaś ca
svar-loka-pālāḥ khaga-loka-pālāḥ
nṛ-loka-pālās tala-loka-pālāḥ..
gandharva-vidyādhara-cāraṇeśāḥ
ye yakṣa-rakṣoraga-nāga-nāthāḥ.
ye vā ṛṣiṇām ṛṣabhāḥ pītṛṇām
dāityendra-siddheśvara-dānavendrāḥ...* 2.6.42-45.

¹⁰ *ayajan vyaktam avyaktam puruṣam su-śamāhitāḥ...* 2.6.29cd.

Śrīdhara comments:—

*vyaktam indriyādīrūpeṇa, avyaktam svataḥ. anena "puruṣam
jātam agrata" ityasya artho darśitāḥ.*

¹¹ *etan nānā'vatārāṇām nidhānam bijam avyayam...* 1.3.5 ab.

¹² 1.3.6-26.

The concluding remarks of the *Bhāgavata* in this context are interesting in that they throw light on the relationship between God and His Descents. The *Bhāgavata* compares here the Descents with streamlets (*kulyā*) and God with their inexhaustible reservoir (*avidāsin saraḥ*).¹³ Such comparison suggests that while God exercises limitless powers the Descents manifest only partial powers although, as the same comparison leads us to believe, the Descents are made of the same stuff as God. Thus His Descents, whose number can never be exhausted,¹⁴ are but the forms of God.¹⁵ In spite of this consubstantiality between God and His Descents, the *Bhāgavata* has indulged in the classification of Descents, based on partial manifestation of powers in a Descent and also on the practical difference between God and the empirical ego (*Jīva*). Descents, according to the *Bhāgavata*,¹⁶ fall under three distinct categories—*Amśa*, *Kalā* and *Amśa-kalā*. *Amśas* are literally forms of God, having omniscience and omnipotence although they need not reveal all the powers they actually possess. *Yajña*,¹⁷ *Vibhu*,¹⁸ *Vāmana*¹⁹ were all parts (*Amśas*) of God. They have exhibited divine powers which can legitimately belong to God only. *Kalās*, on the other hand, are empirical egos, the God-filled souls. All gods belong to this category.²⁰ Among human beings, *Vyāsa*,²¹ *Gaya*,²²

¹³ *avatārā hyasamkhyeyā hareḥ sattva-nidher dvijāḥ.
yathāvidāsināḥ kulyāḥ saraḥ syuḥ sahasraśaḥ..* 1.3.26.

¹⁴ *kāla-trayopapannāni janma-karmāṇi me nṛpa.
anukramanto naivāntaṁ gacchanti paramarjayaḥ..* 10.51.38.

¹⁵ *tenaiva satyamānena sarva-jño bhagavān hariḥ.
pātu sarvaḥ sva-rūpāir naḥ sadā sarvatra sarva-gaḥ..* 6.8.33.

¹⁶ *ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁśaḥ* 1.3.28a.

¹⁷ *yajñaḥ sarva-gato hariḥ.* 8.1.18b.

¹⁸ *tasyām jajñe tato devo vibhur ityabhiśrutāḥ.* 8.1.21cd.

¹⁹ *praviṣṭam ātmani harer aṁśam hyavitathekṣaṇaḥ.
so'dityām vīryam ādhatta tapasā cira-sambhṛtam..
vijayā nāma sā proktā yasyām janma vidur hareḥ.
taṁ baṣuṁ vāmanaṁ dṛṣṭvā modamānā maharṣayaḥ.
karmāṇi kārayāmāsuḥ puraskṛtya prajāpatim..* 8.17.23, 18.6cd, 19.

²⁰ *surāḥ kalāḥ hareḥ.* 4.14.22b.

²¹ *vicitra-vīryaḥ cā'varajo nāmnā citrāṅgado hataḥ.
yasyām pārāśarāt śākṣād avatīrṇo hareḥ kalā..* 9.22.21.

²² *gayaṁ nṛpaḥ kaḥ pratimāti karmabhiḥ
sat-sevako'nyo bhagavat-kalām rte..* 5.15.9ad.

Datta, *Kumāra*²³ are all God-filled souls with extraordinary powers not to be found in ordinary mortals. *Amśa-kalās*, the residuary type, expose hybrid characters of both man and God. For example, *Ṛṣabha* revealed the signs of Godhood at his very birth²⁴ although he owes his origin to human parentage. The *Bhāgavata* therefore calls this species *Amśa-kalās* where the borderline between man and God seems to have been blurred.²⁵ It may be noted here that this classification of Descents is only practical and need not be taken too rigidly. For example, the third variety of Descents (*Amśa-kalās*) is an obvious admission of the fact that both man and God can be one and the same person. In fact the *Bhāgavata* itself has used the term "*Kalā*" to describe Descents in general²⁶ and this gives a hint to Śrīdhara to describe any being as "*Kalā*", who displays the symptom of divinity and still has not been able to acquire a distinct name in the category of Descents.²⁷

The intrinsic law of Divine Sport, that regulates the unfoldment of the cosmic process, suggests that creation is a purposive endeavour conforming to a definite design. Although from a higher point of view, indicated above, God and entire creation are two simultaneous expressions of *Bhagavān*, yet, in consonance with the Doctrine of Causality (*abhivyakti-vāda*) adopted by the *Bhāgavata*, God as the omniscient and omnipotent being may be regarded as the overall superintendent to bring about the operation of Time (*Kāla*), Nature (*Svabhāva*) and Action (*Karman*) on primordial matter (*Prakṛti*) which thus evolves into different categories (*tattvas*) resulting ultimately into the fourteen planes of physical existence. In this process of differentiation of primordial matter which is unmanifest (*a-vyakta*) the first step is the appearance of the three *guṇa*-reals—*sattva*,

²³ *dattah kumāra ṛṣabho bhagavān pitā nah viṣṇuḥ śivāya jagatām kalayā'vatīrṇaḥ*. 11.4.17bc.

²⁴ *atha ha tam (ṛṣabham) utpatyaivābhivyajyamāna-bhagaval-lakṣaṇam... jagdhuḥ*. 5.4.1.

²⁵ *tatrā'gnidhriḥ'ṁśa-kalayā'vatariṣyāmyātma-tūlyam anuṣalabhamānaḥ*. 5.3.18.

²⁶ *namas tasmai bhagavate kṛṣṇāyā'mala-kīrttaye, yo dhatte sarva-bhūtānām a-bhāvāyotatiḥ kalāḥ*. 10.87.46.

²⁷ Śrīdhara comments on 11.4.18:—*evam-ādau yatrā'vataḥ nāma nāsti tatrā "viṣṇuḥ śivāya jagatām kalayā'vatīrṇaḥ" ityanuvartaniyam*.

rajas and *tamas*—as three distinct realities. God as the witness of each of these realities acquires, in relation to each of them, a separate name.²⁸ The name varies according as His mission does. For creation God as the witness of *rajas* is called Brahmā; for sustenance of the universe thus brought into existence God as the witness of *sattva* is called Viṣṇu; and, when the cosmic drama reaches its denouement He is called Girīśa, the witness of *tamas*, responsible for the total annihilation of creation—both gross and subtle.²⁹ God thus viewed in relation to the three *guṇas* is called “*Guṇā’vatāras*” and if Descents as such are taken to be distinct from God then God may be said to effect creation, sustenance and destruction through the *Guṇā’vatāras*.³⁰

If God is to maintain His transcendental nature while superintending the cosmic process and yet if the creative process is to proceed in perfect harmony, He has to translate His divine will through some other conscious agencies. Such agencies are to be traced to God and they should be directly responsible in their individual capacity for each step of the evolution of categories from the primordial matter (*Prakṛti*). These agencies, called the cosmic officers with specific assignments (*ādhikārikas*), and the manifestations of God, in the act of His divine supervision especially with reference to the internal organs (*antaḥ-karṇa*) that emerge in course of the evolutionary process, deserve due consideration as well. The first category to evolve from *Prakṛti* is the cosmic mass (*Mahat*) and the cosmic officer in charge of it is Hiraṇya-garbha who, in the light of the Doctrine of Descent, may be regarded as a partial expression of Brahmā, one of the *Guṇā’vatāras*. From the cosmic mass evolves *Ahaṁkāra* and the corresponding officer is Rudra, an emanation of Girīśa, the other *Guṇā’vatāra*. Similarly the officers in charge of the eleven organs—five sense-organs, five action-organs and the mind—are the eleven gods—the god of

²⁸ *sattvaṁ rajas tama iti prakṛter guṇās tair
yaktāḥ paraḥ puruṣa eka ihā’sya dhatte.
sthityādaye hari-virīñci-hareti-samjñāḥ
śreyāṁsi tatra khalu sattva-tanor nṛṇāṁ syuḥ..* 1.2.23.

²⁹ *yo vā ahaṁ ca girīśa ca vibhuḥ svayaṁ ca
sthityudbhava-pralaya-hṛtva ātma-mūlam.
bhittvā tri-pād bāhyā eka uru-prarohas
tasmai nāmo bhagavate bhuvana-drumāya..* 3.9.16.

³⁰ *guṇā’vatārāir viśvasya sarga-sthityaḥpyayātrayaṁ
sṛjataḥ śrī-nivāsasya vyācakṣvodāra-vikramam..* 3.7.28.

directions, the god of wind, the sun-god, *Pracetas*, the twin gods (*Aśvinī-kumāra-dvaya*), the god of fire, the god of lightning (*Indra*), *Upendra*, *Mitra* and the moon.³¹ The god of the cosmic egg constituted by the elements is *Hiraṇya-garbha* who, as distinguished from the first *Hiraṇya-garbha*, the controller of *Mahat*, may be regarded as a fragment (*Amśa*) of the latter. This second *Hiraṇya-garbha* is the prototype of a number of other gods that occupy the different parts of the gross body of God.^{32a} As *Mahat* is the first evolute of which are evolved in succession the other evolutes, the gods from *Rudra* onwards that control those other evolutes may likewise be regarded as the "Amśas" of *Hiraṇya-garbha*. And as *Hiraṇya-garbha* bound down to cosmic assignment may be looked upon as an empirical ego (*Jiva*)³² so all gods traceable to *Hiraṇya-garbha* may be viewed as labouring souls discharging the duties assigned to them by God.³³

Although God as the cosmic witness endures through each category of creation yet His benign presence is specially felt in mind due to its preponderance of *sattva*. According to the *Bhāgavata* the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*, briefly called mind) consists in *Citta*, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Buddhi* and *Manas*³⁴ although in the evolutionary process *Citta* and *Buddhi* are treated as identical. Through these is revealed God in four successive forms—*Vāsudeva*, *Samkarṣaṇa*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*.³⁵ As distinguished from the cosmic officers—*Hiraṇya-garbha*,

³¹ *vaikārikāṇ mano jajñe devā vaikārikā daśa. dig-vātā'rka-praceto'ivi-vahnīndropendra-mitrakāḥ.. 2.5.30.*

^{32a} 2.1.29-36.

³² *Śrī-saṁkara uvāca
vayaṁ na tāta prabhavāma bhūmni
yasmin pare'nye'pyaja-jīva-koṣāḥ.
bhavanti kāle na bhavanti hidyāḥ
sahasraśo yatra vayaṁ bhramāmaḥ.. 9.4.56.*

³³ *tasya'pi sraṣṭur īśasya kūṭasthasya'khilā'tmanah.
sṛjyaṁ sṛjāmi sṛṣṭo'ham ikṣayaivābhicoditāḥ.. 2.5.17.*

vide also 10.40.3

³⁴ *mano buddhir ahaṁkāraś cittam ityantar-ātmakam.
catur-dhā lakṣyate bhedo vṛttyā lakṣaṇa-rūpayā.. 3.26.14.*

³⁵ Śrīdhara comments on 3.26.21 :—
*adhyātma-rūpeṇa cittam iti, upāśya-rūpeṇa vāsudeva iti, adhiṣṭhātā tu
tasya kṣetra-jñāḥ. evaṁ ahaṁkāre saṁkarṣaṇa upāśyaḥ, rudro'dhiṣ-
ṭhātā, manasi aniruddha upāśyaḥ, candro'dhiṣṭhātā, buddhau pradyum-
na upāśyaḥ brahmā'dhiṣṭhātā iti draṣṭavyam.*

Rudra etc.—they are the cosmic witnesses and so, in terms of the *Bhāgavata*, may be regarded as the *Amśas* of God, or rather of the *Guṇā'vatāra* Viṣṇu, while *Hiraṇya-garbha* etc. are His *Kalās*. The ten organs being just subsidiary to the inner mechanism the *Bhāgavata* seems to have chosen to confine the divine manifestations to inner mechanism only although a casual reference indicative of other divine manifestations beyond the pale of the inner mechanism is also found in the *Bhāgavata*.³⁶ In the elemental creation, God, the cosmic witness, is found again as *Vairāja-Puruṣa* in the physical universe and also as the inner controller through the mind of man. Thus under the overall supervision of God, the different cosmic officers, falling into a hierarchical order, bring directly the subtle and gross creations into existence. In terms of the *Bhāgavata* Doctrine of Descent, God manifests Himself as *Amśas* and *Kalās*; as *Kalās* He becomes involved in creation while as *Amśas* He stands out of it as its disinterested guide. God thus maintains His immanent and transcendent nature.

Creation down to *Mahar-loka* continues up to *dvi-parārdha*, the life of *Hiraṇya-garbha*. Further down, the three worlds involve his daily activity. His everyday is of two *kalpas* of which one *kalpa* is meant for his activity while the other is the period of his retirement. The period of activity of *Hiraṇya-garbha*, then, should engage our attention while we consider the question of sustenance of the universe. As Viṣṇu, the controller of the *sattva-guṇa*, God sustains the universe by his unflagging vigilance right up to the end of a *kalpa*.³⁷ And as a *kalpa* is made up of a few *manvantaras*, each of which, again, consists in a number of *yugas*, God marked by these units of time is said to reveal Himself as Descents. This is how God came to be recognised as *Manvantarā'vatāras* and *yugā'vatāras*. In every *Manvantara*, under the sustained inspiration from God (the *Manvantarā'vatāra*), operate Manu, his sons, the hermits, Indra and the gods in their joint venture to maintain law and order. The holy Scriptures (*Vedas*) embodying eternal truth are revealed to the hermits; and, Manu as the head of the human organisation

³⁶ *sātvatām nava-mūrtinām ādi-mūrtir ahaṁ paraḥ*.. 11.16.32cd.

³⁷ *ā-kalpam evaṁ gato bhagavān ātma-yoga-māyā-vīracita-vividha-loka-yātrā-gopīthāyā* 5.20.41.

takes to propagate them. The sons of Manu administer human subjects according to the prescriptions of the *Vedas*. Naturally the subjects perform sacrifices prescribed by *Vedic* injunctions, in which the gods enjoy their respective shares. But the lion's share goes to Indra, the god of heaven. It is his duty to pay back the sacrificial benefits in the shape of protection of the three worlds.³⁸ Thus under the superintendence of a *Manvantarā'vatāra*, gods and men (both rulers and hermits) enter into close co-operation to fulfil the divine mission of sustenance of the universe. Nay, God goes still further. In order to be thorough in His vigilance He distributes His attention to each unit (*yuga*) of a *manvantara*. As a *Yugā'vatāra*, then, He imparts knowledge as an enlightened soul (*siddha* e.g., Sanaka), teaches the path of action as a ritualistic seer (*ṛṣi* e.g., Yājñavalkya), propagates *yoga* (meditation) as a practical spiritualist (*yogēśa* e.g., Dattātreya), contributes to progeny as a progenitor (*prajāśa* e.g., Marīci), kills the enemies of man (*dasyus*) as a king (*svarāj*) and, at the end of a *yuga*, replaces the whole scene by a new one, as Time.³⁹ In relation to a *Manvantarā'vatāra*, the entire organisation—both human and celestial—as noted above, consists in so many *Kalās*.⁴⁰ With the aid of their respective *Kalās* fourteen *Manvantarā'vatāras*—Yajña,⁴¹ Vibhu,⁴² Satyasena⁴³ and eleven others—incessantly keep them-

³⁸ *yajñādayo yāh kathitāh pauruṣyas tanavo nṛpa. manvādayo jagad-yātrām nayantyābhiḥ pracoditāh.. catur-yugānte kālena grastān śruti-gaṇān yathā. tapasā ṛṣayo'paśyan yato dharmah sanātanaḥ.. tato dharmam catur-pādām manavo hariṇoditāh. yuktāh sañcārayantyaddhā sve sve kāle mahim nṛpa.. pālāyanti prajā-pālā yāvad antam vibhāgaśah. yajña-bhāga-bhujo devā ye ca tatṛānvitāś ca taiḥ.. indro bhagavatā dattaṁ trilokya-śriyam ūrjitām. bhuñjānaḥ pāti lokāms trin kāmam loke pravarṣati..* 8.14.3-7.

³⁹ *jñānam eā'nuyugam brūte hariḥ siddha-svarūpa-dhṛk. ṛṣi-rūpa-dharaḥ karma yogam yogēśa-rūpa-dhṛk.. sargam prajāśa-rūpeṇa dasyūn hanyāt svarād-vapuḥ. kāla-rūpeṇa sarveṣām a-bhavāya pṛthag-guṇaḥ..* 8.14.8-9.

⁴⁰ *ṛṣayo manavo devā manu-putrā mahaujaśah. kalāḥ sarve harer eva sa-prajāpatayaḥ smṛtāḥ..* 1.3.27.

⁴¹ *tāms tathā'vasitān vikṣya yajñāḥ sarva-gato hariḥ. yāmāḥ parivṛto devair hatvā'sāsat triviṣṭapam..* 8.1.18.

⁴² 8.1.21.

⁴³ *darmasya sunṛtāyān tu bhagavān puruṣottamaḥ. satyasena iti khyāto jātāḥ satyavratāḥ saha..* 8.1.25.

selves engaged in maintaining law and order throughout a *kalpa*.

It would appear from the nature of assignments of men and gods, referred to above, that the law and order which they try to uphold is basically moral and spiritual. But, if sustenance of law and order, in spite of its moral and spiritual character, means a stagnation it is bound to be opposed to the very nature of *Bhagavān*. *Bhagavān*, as the Doctrine of Divine Sport implies, is the ever-renewing dynamism resulting into infinite differentiations.⁴⁴ From the higher point of view such differentiations may be taken as simultaneous, or, following the ordinary law of cause and effect, they may appear one after the other.⁴⁵ Nevertheless the fact remains that the differentiations of *Bhagavān* cannot be categorized into specific patterns and are thus open to fresh possibilities. As a preparation for such possibilities *Bhagavān* has endowed man with free will. And as free will involves a choice between at least two alternatives, it implies a struggle between two opposites—instinct and reason—the demons and the gods. So man is the battling ground of two contrary forces and, in this incessant fight, the evil, as a rule, gains victory over the good, because the divine purpose is accelerated by the process of steady deterioration. This steady deterioration is reflected in the conception of the four *yugas* in which the movement lies from the golden age to the iron age. That God silently approves of this process is suggested by the fact that He allows change of His colour in response to the change of era.⁴⁶ When such conflict between the good and the evil reaches a critical point, that is to say, when the evil spirits flourish and the good are set at naught by the denial of even elementary justice to them, *Bhagavān* realises His fresh

⁴⁴ *yām yām śaktim upāśrīya puru-śaktiḥ paraḥ pumān.
ātmānam kṛdayan kṛdān karoti vikaroti ca...* 2.4.7.

⁴⁵ *yathā guṇāni tu prakṛter yugapat kramato'pi vā.
bibharīḥ bhūtiḥ tvekeḥ kurvan karmāni janmahib...* 2.4.9.

⁴⁶ *āsan varṇas trayo hyasya grhṇato'nuyugam tanūh.
śuklo raktas tathā pīta tīdānim kṛṣṇatām gataḥ...* 10.8.13.

possibility, at that juncture, by courting embodiment as a Descent.⁴⁷

According to the *Bhāgavata* pure matter constitutes the body of a Descent.⁴⁸ And pure matter being supra-cosmic substance it is but natural for a Descent, so Śrīdhara's trend of arguments would suggest, to depart from this world together with his body, as distinguished from a *yogin* who by mystic powers (*yoga-dhāraṇā*) burns his physical body and then departs. If Śrīdhara's contention is limited to the fact that a Descent departs with his body made of pure matter the *Bhāgavata* will come to his support.⁴⁹ But if he takes this verse to mean that a Descent possesses a single body of pure matter only, the *Bhāgavata* will contradict him; for, it expressly mentions that a Descent relinquishes his body before departure.⁵⁰ These two apparently contradictory statements by the *Bhāgavata* may be reconciled if a Descent is recognised to have a couple of bodies—one of pure matter and the other of *Prakṛti*. In fact the *Bhāgavata* recognises both the bodies to belong to God, the first Descent. It is stated that the entire creation that constitutes the gross body of God is built up by *Māyā*.⁵¹ But, behind this gross form shines in its pristine glory God's spiri-

⁴⁷ *tvam deha-tantraḥ prasamāya pāpmanām
nideśa-bhājān ca vibho vibhūtaye.
yathā'vatārās tava lūkarādayas
tathā'yam apyātma-pathopalabdhye...* 3.33.5.

⁴⁸ *tvayodito'yaṁ jagato hitāya
yadā yadā veda-pathaḥ purāṇaḥ.
bādhyeta pāṣaṇḍa-pathair a-sadbhis
tadā bhavān sattva-guṇaṁ bibharti...* 10.48.23 vide also 10.2.29-34.

⁴⁹ *lokā'bhirāmān sva-tanuṁ dhāraṇā-dhyāna-maṅgalam.
yoga-dhāraṇayā'gneyyā dagdhvā dhāmā'viśat svakam...* 11.31.6.
Śrīdhara pleads for the spiritual form of Bhagavān as follows :—
*bhagavāns tu ... sva-tanu-sahita eva svakam dhāma vaikunṭhā'khyam
āviśat ... icchā-śarirā'bhiprāyeṇa vā yathā-śrutam evā'stu; tatrā'pi
tu lokā'bhirāmān-ityādinām viśeṣaṇāṇām ānarthakya-prasaṅgāt, tad
api adagdhvā nirgata ityeva sāmpratam...*

⁵⁰ *yayā'harad bhuvo bhāraṁ tām tanuṁ vijahāvajāḥ.
kaṇṭakam kaṇṭakeneva dvayaṁ cā'pīṣituh samam..
yathā matsyā'di-rūpeṇa dhatte jahyād yathā naṣaḥ.
bhū-bhāraḥ kṣayito yena jahau tac ca kalevaram...* 1.15.34-35.

⁵¹ *amunī bhagavad-rūpe māyā te hyanuvarṇite.
ubhe api na grhṇanti māyā-sṛṣṭe vipaścitaḥ...* 2.10.35.

win our confidence and thereby to instill into us the ideals of life. That is why Rāma, a *Lilā'vatāra*, appears to have been mad with the grief for Sītā only to awaken us to the troubles that worldly attachments mean. Otherwise, being the eternal possessor of *Cit-śakti* which by its nature is opposed to delusion, a *Lilā'vatāra* cannot be swept away by the trifles of weal and woe.⁵⁹ So, like an actor he puts on different garments,⁶⁰ like a magician exhibits his fireworks⁶¹ and like wind moves high and low, unbound.⁶² A *Lilā'vatāra* destroys the evils, comforts the good and restores moral equilibrium befitting the particular age⁶³ and in accordance with the path laid down by the *Vedas*.⁶⁴ He renders impetus to new values (*aiśvarya*), shows the right path of truth, showers upon his devotees the undenyng gift of pity and thus spreads the halo of his fame.⁶⁵ Fully satisfied that his unstinted fame has been largely able to overhaul the mental constitution of humanity, a *Lilā'vatāra* departs from this world, leaving behind the living flame of his glory burning for ever and his enchanting form and speech as the permanent source of inspiration⁶⁶ and the common heritage of mankind.

Thus the Doctrine of Descent as envisaged by the *Bhā-*

⁵⁹ *marttyā'vatāras tviha marttya-likṣaṇam
rakṣo-vadhāyaiva na kevalam vibhoḥ.
kuto'nyathā syād ramataḥ sva ātmanah
sītā-kṛtāni vyaśanānīśvarasya..* 5.19.5.

⁶⁰ *yathā matsyā'di-rūpeṇa dhatte jahyād yathā naṣaḥ..* 1.15.35ab.

⁶¹ *naitāvatā bhagavataḥ sva-māyā-maya-vṛttibhiḥ.
praduṣyetā'nubhāvas tair māyinaḥ kuhakam yathā..* 12.10.30.

⁶² *uccāvaśeṣu bhūteṣu caran vāyur ivaśvaraḥ.
noccāvacatuṣām bhajate nirguṇatvād dhiyo guṇaiḥ..* 8.24.6.

⁶³ *ittham nṛ-tiryag-ṛṣi-deva-jhaṣā'vatārair
lokān vibhāvayasi haṁsi jagat-pratīpān.
dharmam mahāpuruṣa pāsi yugā'nuvṛttam
channam kalau yad abhāvas tri-yuga'tha sa tvam..* 7.9.38.

⁶⁴ *yadā yadā veda-pathaḥ purāṇaḥ
bādhyeta pāṣaṇḍa-pathir a-sadbhiḥ
tadā bhavān sattva-guṇam bibharti..* 10.48.23 bed

⁶⁵ *yadā hyadharmeṇa tamo-dhiyo nṛpa
jīvanti tatraiṣa hi sattvataḥ kila.
dhatte bhagam satyam ṛtam dayām yaśo
bhavāya rūpāṇi dadhad yuge yuge ..* 1.10.25

⁶⁶ *jīvasya yaḥ sarisrato vimokṣaṇam
na jānato'nartha-vahāc charitataḥ.
lilā'vatārāḥ sva-yaśaḥ-pradīpakam
prajvālayat tvā tam aham prapadye..* 10.70.39 vide also 11.1.7.

gavata has given the widest interpretation of the *Viṣṇu*-hymn. It visions *Vedic* *Viṣṇu* to range from *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality, to a *Līlā'vatāra* with whom we can establish the most intimate personal relationship. The concept of a *Līlā'vatāra* fulfils the craving of the *Vedic* seer—"Pray, let *Viṣṇu* maintain times and again the essence of moral order by His birth; let His glory endow us with auspicious mind".⁶⁷ Though *Viṣṇu* appeals to us directly through God yet His transcendental nature requires due recognition. Thus His immanent and transcendent natures are co-ordinated by the concept of Divine Sport.⁶⁸ It is obvious that such benign and sovereign personality would reduce all gods—high and low—to His mere shadows recognised by the *Bhāgavata* as His *Kalās* over whom shines the halo of the great God, *Viṣṇu*.

⁶⁷ *ṛtasya garbhaṁ januṣā pīpartana
mahas te viṣṇo sumatiṁ bhajāmahe..* RV 1.156.3

⁶⁸ *sarve hymī vidhi-karās tava sattva-dhāmno
brahmādayo vāyam ivēśa na codvijantaḥ.
kṣemāya bhūtaya utā'tma-sukhāya cā'īya
vikriḍitaṁ bhagavato rucirā'vatāraiḥ..* 7.9.13

CHAPTER IX

THE DOCTRINE OF INCARNATION (CRITICAL)

The pantheon of *Vedic* gods of different categories that had filled the entire space of earth, air and heaven, and had participated with men in sacrificial oblations, together with the enemies of both gods and men, seems to have undergone complete orientation by the time the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* was written. The process seems to have been ingrained in the very concept of the different deities of whom a large section represented different aspects only of the same reality. It was no wonder then that the logical mind would try to integrate those aspects on realistic basis, resulting in the reduction of the inflated number of the gods to their rational minimum. The Etymological School of *Vedic* interpretation, for example, recognised three gods only—the god of fire on the earth, the god of wind or thunderbolt in the air, and the sun-god in the sky. It tried to explain away the sizable number of gods as mere appellations of the three gods, indicative of their functional differences.¹ The *Bhāgavata* completes this process of synthesis by drawing upon the concept of the three strides of Viṣṇu—a concept that has enjoyed unassailable authenticity throughout the *Vedic* period. The three strides of Viṣṇu embraced the three regions and naturally the three gods of the Etymological School were absorbed in the all-comprehensive being of Viṣṇu. The three were thus reduced to one. This unique position of Viṣṇu was duly recognised in that He was called God as distinguished from gods—the Great Personality (*Puruṣa*) as different from the shadowy figures of the *Vedic* gods. The declaration of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* that *Puruṣa* was all, encouraged this Great Personality to include further in His being, all categories of exist-

¹ *tisra eva devatā iti nairuktāḥ. agniḥ pṛthivī-sthāno vāyur vendro vāntarikṣa-sthānaḥ sūryo dyu-sthānaḥ. . . Nirukta 7.5*

The BU also (1.2.3) says:—*sa tredhā'tmānaṁ vyakuruta, ādityaṁ tṛtīyaṁ, vāyuṁ tṛtīyaṁ. Śaṅkara* observes on this:—*tathā vāyavādityāpekṣayā'gnim tṛtīyaṁ iti draṣṭavyam.*

ence, both living and non-living.² Viṣṇu thus achieved all-embracing unity that appropriated the sublimity and majesty of all the gods.³

But the absorption of gods into the essence of Viṣṇu did not mean their total annihilation. While forming parts of Viṣṇu, they were left with their individuality to further the Divine purpose of God—to assist Him, in creating the universe by undertaking cosmic assignments, and, at the time of cosmic deluge, in destroying the same. God reserves for Himself the task of sustenance. The variety of functions on the part of the gods, to which the Etymological School refers, is thus restated in terms of creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe to which different gods contribute their own share. But as discharging their respective obligations they are no longer free but are bound down to specific commitments. They fare therefore no better than ordinary mortals. Distinguished from these gods, are the *forms* of God, which He undertakes for the purpose of sustenance. His purpose will be defeated if the *forms* of God as well suffer from the same limitations as the gods do. Hence such *forms* deserve to retain the original character of Godhood, although behaving like ordinary beings.

But God, the Great Personality, *vis-à-vis* the sustaining *forms* of God on the one hand and the gods on the other, poses the question of interrelationship among these realities. As already noted, the *Bhāgavata* has suggested to consider this question in terms of the Doctrine of Incarnation. In due deference to the fact that the *forms* of God are free as distinguished from the gods tied to unavoidable assignments, the *Bhāgavata* has chosen to call the former as "*Aṁśas*" (parts) and the latter as "*Kalās*" (particles). One might deduce from this assertion

² ahaṁ bhayān bhavaś caiva ta ime munayo'grajāḥ.
surā'sura-narā nāgāḥ khagā myga-sarīrpaḥ..
gandhavā'psaraso yakṣā rakṣo-bhūta-gaṇoragāḥ..
paśavaḥ pitarāḥ siddhā vidyādhrāś cāraṇā drumāḥ..
anye ca vividhā jivā jala-sthala-nabhaukasaḥ..
grāharkṣa-ketavaś tārāś taḍitaḥ stanayitnavāḥ..
sarvaṁ puruṣa evedaṁ bhūtaṁ bhavyaṁ bhavaś ca yat.
tenedam āvṛtaṁ viśvaṁ vitastim adhitigṛhati.. 2.6.13-16

³ mūlaṁ hi viṣṇur devānāṁ yatra dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ.
sa hi sarva-surādhyakṣo hyasura-dvid guhā'sayaḥ..
tan-mūlā devatāḥ sarvāḥ seiṣarāḥ sa-catur-mukhāḥ..

of the *Bhāgavata* that the term "*Amśa*" might be applied to a reality homogeneous in character and substance with its prototype and that the term "*Kalā*" would be applicable to a different kind of reality heterogeneous in character and substance from its prototype. In spite of the *Bhāgavata*'s admission of a hybrid type called "*Amśa-kalā*", as we have already noticed, where the same reality is liable to be conceived as both God and man, we might adhere to the two clear-cut divisions into *Amśa* and *Kalā* and ignore the hybrid type, for the purpose of exposition of the *Bhāgavata* Doctrine of Incarnation. Further, we might use the two terms—*Amśa* and *Kalā*—not only in relation to God but also in connection with one god and another. Thus a god may be an *Amśa* of another god but *Kalā* of a form of God, suggesting the homogeneity between the two gods but heterogeneity between the form of God and the god under consideration.

In relation to creation and destruction of the universe the *Bhāgavata* has arranged both gods and men in a hierarchy. In such a scheme the enemies of gods and men are also accommodated. Already in the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, Primordial Matter (*Prakṛti*) was described as made up of three fibres (*guṇas*)—red, white and black (*lohita-śukla-kṛṣṇā*)⁴—and they were taken to mean the three *guṇa*-reals—*rajas*, *sattva* and *tamas*—standing for the principle of activity, the principle of knowledge and the principle of darkness respectively. These native characters of the three *guṇas* that constitute Primordial Matter have influenced the cross-sections of both *Amśas* and *Kalās*, that enter into the formation of the hierarchy, into three broad categories—*sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*—that is to say, wise, active and ignorant. For example, gods, men and the creatures of hell represent three types of beings differing from one another in point of varying natures of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* respectively.⁵

Let us now examine in some details a few categories of Descents in the light of these observations:—

Associated with the threefold Divine purpose viz, creation, sustenance and destruction stand the *Guṇā'vatāras*—Brahmā,

⁴ *ajām ekām lohita-śukla-kṛṣṇām* ŚU 4.5

⁵ *sattvām rajas tama iti tisraḥ sura-ṇ-nārakāḥ*... 2.10.41 ab

Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. The Etymological School, as we have already noticed, had arrived at the concept of the triad of gods—fire, wind (or Indra) and the sun. During the *Brāhmaṇa* period, fire became intimately connected with *Brahmā*, one of the four priests, who would superintend the sacrificial rites performed by the other three priests. This exalted position of *Brahmā* in fire-worship gradually deified him and in course of time fire-god was replaced by *Brahmā* as we find in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. Agni is said to have produced man.⁶ *Brahmā* was therefore conceived to be in charge of creation. Similarly the god of wind was gradually transformed into Maheśvara who, at his core, was *Vedic* Rudra, “a storm god considered mainly in the form of lightning.”⁷ Rudra “as known to the *Yajur-Veda* is essentially a compound of the two gods of fire and storm”⁸ and this composite nature of Agni and Rudra was re-affirmed by the recognition of Maheśvara in the same triad with *Brahmā*. But because the *Vedic* Rudra, as the derivative meaning of the term would also suggest, was a god of horror, Maheśvara became associated with destruction of the universe. Creation and destruction being thus assigned to *Brahmā* and Maheśvara respectively, Viṣṇu, the sun-god, joined the triad as the god of sustenance. These three functions were gradually related to the three *guṇas* of Primordial Matter; and, as a result, the triad of gods—*Brahmā*, Maheśvara and Viṣṇu—were viewed in relation to the three *guṇas*. Thus *Brahmā* as the god of creation became associated with *rajas*, the principle of activity, Maheśvara, the god of destruction, with *tamas*, the principle of darkness and Viṣṇu, the god of sustenance, with *sattva*, the principle of knowledge. Hence the concept of three gods—*Brahmā*, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara—is the direct result of the evolution of the *Vedic* deities.

In the *Bhāgavata* these three gods have found due recognition as *Guṇāvatāras*. Indicative of their mutual relationship with the three *guṇas*, *Brahmā* was taken to be red,

⁶ Keith RPVU p. 161.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 146.

Maheśvara black and Viṣṇu white.^{8a} Their integration into the nature of God, the Great Personality, as well as their composite character have also forced themselves on the notice of the *Bhāgavata*. The *Bhāgavata* denounces the outlook that tries to read mutual difference among the triad of gods⁹ and appreciates the wisdom that penetrates into their unity.¹⁰ It reiterates that Brahmā and Rudra are not two different realities but are only functional names referring to the same being.¹¹ In fact, according to the *Bhāgavata*, they cannot afford to be different because one and the same reality viz, the Great Personality has assumed three names in response to three different functions—creation, sustenance and destruction.¹² This basic unity among the three gods and God suggests that in the light of the *Bhāgavata* Doctrine of Incarnation they can be regarded as the *Amśas* of God. This aspect is asserted when the *Bhāgavata* describes both Brahmā and Maheśvara as “universal preceptors”¹³—an epithet primarily applicable to God in view of His inherent power of spirituality (*Cit-śakti*). As luminous realities the triad may be called gods and as the source of all other gods may be described as the gods of the gods.¹⁴

Although the three *Guṇāvalāras* represent one and same reality viz, God yet their further differentiations into Descents

^{8a} *sa tvam tri-loka-sthitaye sva-māyayā
bibharji suklaṁ khalu varṇam ātmanaḥ.
sargāya raktaṁ rajasopabṛmhitam
kṛṣṇaṁ ca varṇam tamasā janā'tyaye..* 10.3.20

⁹ *tvam eka evā'sya sataḥ prasūtiḥ
tvam sannidhānaṁ tvam anugrahaḥ ca.
tvam-māyayā saṁvṛta-cetasas tvam
paśyanti nānā na vipaścito ye..* 10.2.28

¹⁰ *trayāṇām eka-bhāvānām yo na paśyati vai bhidām.
sarva-bhūtātmanāṁ brahmaṇ sa śāntim adhigacchati..*
4.7.54 vide also 12.10.21-22.

¹¹ *ātma-māyām samāviśya so'haṁ guṇamayīm dvija.
sṛjan rakṣan haran viśvaṁ dadhre saṁjñāṁ kriyocitām..
tasmin brahmaṇyadvītiye kevale paramātmani.
brahma-rudrau ca bhūtāni bhedenā'jño'nupaśyati..* 4.7.51-52

¹² *paraḥ puruṣa eka ihā'sya dhatte
sthityādaye hari-virīñci-hareti-saṁjñāḥ.* 1.2.23 bc

¹³ *Brahmā uvāca
tasmai namo bhagavate vāsudevāya dhīmahi.
yaṁ-māyayā dur-jayayā māṁ vadanti jagad-gurum..* 2.5.12
rudraṁ tri-lokaika-gurum nanāma śirasā muniḥ.. 12.10.14 cd

¹⁴ *Śri-deva-devā (brahma-viṣṇu-giriśāḥ) ucuḥ.* 4.1.29

reveal mutual differences in kind. According to the *Bhāgavata* scheme, Brahmā results in Hiranya-garbha, Maheśvara in Rudra and Viṣṇu in the four Emanations (*Vyūhas*)—Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. But both Hiranya-garbha and Rudra differ from the four Emanations of Viṣṇu in that they are empirical souls while the Emanations of Viṣṇu are the majestic forms of God. As we shall presently discuss in detail, Hiranya-garbha and Rudra were important *R̥g-Vedic* deities while the Doctrine of Emanation (*Vyūha-vāda*) is an innovation of the *Tāntrikas*. Yet with the rise of Viṣṇu as the sovereign deity together with His amalgamation with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa,¹⁵ the exalted status of both Hiranya-garbha and Rudra was eclipsed and both were relegated to the humble position serving the cause of Viṣṇu. On the other hand, the Doctrine of Emanation that is intimately bound up with the ascendancy of Kṛṣṇa to the sublime stature of Viṣṇu could naturally claim to have a special place in the exposition of the *Bhāgavata* cult. This claim for privilege is reflected in the discrimination between the other forms of Viṣṇu and His fourfold Emanation.

Śrīdhara puts up an admirable plea for this discrimination on metaphysical grounds. He resorts to the popular *Vedāntic* Doctrine of *Bimba-pratibimba-vāda* for this purpose. His arguments may be summed up as follows:—When God is reflected on the three *guṇas* of *Prakṛti*, He is conceived as three prototypes (*bimba*) corresponding to His three reflections (*pratibimba*) on the three *guṇas*. These three prototypes are the triad of gods known as *Guṇā'vatāras*. Although there is unity in the nature of the prototypes in that all the three, unruffled by worldliness, are but *one* in substance, yet the reflections as such are liable to be affected by the nature of the individual *guṇas*; and, so, the reflections vary from one another due to the variation of the characters of the *guṇas*. Thus the reflection of Viṣṇu-prototype on *sattva-guṇa* varies from the reflection of the Brahmā-prototype as well as from that of the Maheśvara-prototype. The basis of this variation lies in the fact that the reflection on *sattva-guṇa* is free; because the *guṇa* concerned, being the principle of illumination, is opposed by nature to delusion.

¹⁵ For details see Chaps. IV and VI.

But as *rajas* and *tamas* stand for activity and darkness respectively, the reflections thereon are pervaded by activity and darkness respectively without the privilege of wisdom. This position on the part of the reflections of *rajas* and *tamas* does not mean that they are steeped in ignorance but only that they lack the knowledge of the highest truth, although their cosmic agency necessarily involves certain amount of knowledge required for the purpose of discharging efficiently their specific assignments. In this sense, they are said to embody *sattva-guṇa*.¹⁶ The reflection on *sattva-guṇa* has acquired the designation of fourfold Emanation (*Vyūha*) while those on the *rajas* and *tamas* are *Hiraṇya-garbha* and *Maheśvara*—empirical egos—however exalted their position in the cosmic process might otherwise be. In terms of the *Bhāgavata*, the reflection on *sattva-guṇa* might be called *Amśa* while those on the *rajas* and *tamas* *Kalās* only. Accordingly, the results of the worship of these gods are bound to vary in consonance with the nature of the god that becomes the object of worship. In this light the worship of the fourfold Emanation of Viṣṇu stands the highest.¹⁷

The arguments of Śrīdhara in favour of Viṣṇu find support in the *Bhāgavata*. To establish the excellence of *sattva* over *rajas* and *tamas*, the *Bhāgavata* draws upon an analogy:

¹⁶ *aham mahendro nirṛtiḥ pracetāḥ
somo'gnir iṣaḥ pavano viriñciḥ.
āditya-viśve vasavo'tha sādhyā
marud-gaṇā rudra-gaṇāḥ sa-siddhāḥ
anye ca ye viśva-sṛjo'mareṣā
bhṛguvādayo'sprṣṭa-rajas-tamaskāḥ.
yasyehitam na viduḥ sprṣṭa-māyāḥ
sattva-pradhānā api kim tato'nye.. 6.3.14-15*

¹⁷ *atredam tattvam:—
vastuno guṇa-sambandhe rūpa-dvayam iheṣyate.
tad-dharma-yogā'yogābhyām bimbavat pratibimbavat..
guṇāḥ satto'ādayaḥ śānta-ghora-mūḍhāḥ svabhāvataḥ..
viṣṇu-brahma-tivānāḥ ca guṇa-yantr-svarūpiṇām..
nā'tibhedo bhaved bhedo guṇa-dharmair ihā'mśataḥ..
sattvasya śāntyā no jātu viṣṇor vikṣepa ucyate..
rajas-tamo-guṇābhyām tu bhavetām brahma-rudrayoḥ..
guṇopamardato bhūyas tad-amśānāḥ ca bhinnatā..
ataḥ samagra-sattvasya viṣṇor mokṣa-karī matih..
amśato bhūti-hetuḥ ca tathā'nanda-mayī svataḥ..
amśatas tārāmyena brahma-rudrā'disevinām..
vibhūṭayo bhavantyeva śanair mokṣo'pyanamśataḥ..*

Śrīdhara on 10.88.5

From inert wood emerges curling smoke, so would the *Bhāgavata* argue, which ultimately kindles into sacrificial flame. Similarly, from the tripartite clod of the man's mind steeped in *tamas*, appears the streak of *rajas* symbolised in spiritual unrest which eventually culminates in the dawning of divine light marked by *sattva*; this light reveals directly the supreme truth.¹⁸ On the basis of this analogy the *Bhāgavata* concludes that only the *sāttvika* persons worship Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu while others labouring under *rajas* and *tamas* fritter away their homage to Fathers, cosmic progenitors and so on.¹⁹ The supremacy of Viṣṇu is further possessed by His *Amśas* such as His Emanations (*Vyūha*) and *Līlā'vatāras* so that their names are absent from the lists of persons (including Brahmā and Maheśvara), stated to be carrying out the orders of the Great Personality.²⁰

The *Bhāgavata* absorbs the Doctrine of Emanation in the all-embracing structure of its Doctrine of Incarnation. By the term "*Vyūha*" (Emanation) the *Bhāgavata* understands "*mūrti*"²¹ (form) that embodies the substance (*ātman*)^{21a} of God. This means that the *Bhāgavata* equates *Vyūha* with *Amśa*. This equation is further corroborated by the *Bhāgavata* in the description of a *Kalpā'vatāra*. Like a *Yugā'vatāra* and a *Mānvantarā'vatāra*, protecting the worlds for a *yuga* and for a *manvantara* respectively, God protects the worlds for a *kalpa*, having undergone emanation (*Vyūha*) of His own self.²² Apparently this specific Emanation of God refers to *Vairāja*-

¹⁸ *pārthivād dāruṇo dhūmas tasmād agnis trayi-mayaḥ.
tamasas tu rajas tasmāt sattvaṁ yad brahma-darśanam..
bhejire munayo'thā'gre bhagavantam adhokṣajam.
sattvaṁ viśuddhaṁ kṣemāya kalpante ye'nu tām iha..* 1.2.24-25

¹⁹ *mumukṣavo ghora-rūpān hitvā bhūta-patīn atha.
nārāyaṇa-parāḥ lāntā bhajanti hyanasūyavaḥ..
rajas-tamaḥ-prakṛtayaḥ sama-līlā bhajanti vai.
pitr-bhūta-prajēśādīn śrīyāśvarya-prajēpsavaḥ..* 1.2.26-27

²⁰ *aham bhavo dakṣa-bhṛgu-pradhānāḥ
prajāśa-bhūteśa-sureśa-mukhyāḥ.
sarve vayaṁ yan-niyamaṁ prapaṇnā
mūrdhnyarpitāṁ loka-hītaṁ vahāmaḥ..* 9.4.54

²¹ *aṅgapāṇḍā'yudhā'kalpāir bhagavāṁs tac catuṣṭayam.
bibharti sma catur-mūrtir bhagavān harir īś'varaḥ..* 12.11.23

^{21a} *na tathā me priyatama ātma-yonir na saṁkaraḥ.
na ca saṁkarṣaṇo na śrīr naivā'tmā ca yathā bhavān..* 11.14.15

²² *evaṁ hyanādi-nidhano bhagavān harir īś'varaḥ.
kalpe kalpe svam ātmānam vyūhya lokān avatyajah..* 12.11.50

Puruṣa manifested in the three worlds; and, lasting for a *kalpa* this Emanation may be described as a *Kalpā'vatāra* in the same way as His form lasting for a *yuga* or a *manvantara* is called a *Yugā'vatāra* or a *Manvantarā'vatāra*. So, a *Vyūha* means an *Amśa-Avatāra*. The fourfold manifestation of Viṣṇu juxtaposed against the *Vairāja-Puruṣa* offers the total picture of the Descent of Viṣṇu in the physical world, supplemented by His inward revelation in the mind of man.

The Doctrine of fourfold Emanation of Viṣṇu forms an integral part of the Kṛṣṇa-cult; and, therefore, the origin and development of this Doctrine must be traced to those of the Kṛṣṇa-cult. It is stated that the historical Kṛṣṇa had Bala-rāma as his brother, Pradyumna as his son and Aniruddha as his grandson. When the extraordinary personality of the historical Kṛṣṇa assured for him the sublime status of Viṣṇu, the Great Personality, then Bala-rāma, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, so closely associated with the historical Kṛṣṇa, followed the suit and were naturally admitted to divinity. Their historical emergence of one from the other was duly recognised although, from the metaphysical point of view, emphasis was laid on the unity of substance.²³ But Bala-rāma had to face difficulty in this new adjustment. He was, after all, the brother of Kṛṣṇa. How could he be taken in the new scheme as an emergence from Kṛṣṇa? Bala-rāma therefore finds admission in another name—Samkarṣaṇa. That it was a mere change of name and not of substance is indicated by the fact that the *Bhāgavata* describes Samkarṣaṇa as a part (*Amśa*) of Bala-rāma.²⁴ But Bala-rāma as such finds recognition as a Descent distinct from *Puruṣa* and outside the pale of the fourfold Emanation.²⁵

The *Bhāgavata* has tried to link up the fourfold manifestation of Viṣṇu with the inner mechanism of man. According to the *Bhāgavata* the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) consists in *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra* and *Citta*. In spite of the fact that

²³ *vāsudevaḥ samkarṣaṇaḥ pradyumnaḥ puruṣaḥ svayam, aniruddha iti brahman mūrti-vyūho'bhidhiyate..* 12.11.21

²⁴ *rāma rāma mahā-bāho na jāne tava vikramam, yasyaikā'mśena vidhrtā jagatī jagataḥ pate..* 10.65.28
Śrīdhara comments:—*ekā'mśena=īśā'khyena*

²⁵ *ekonaviṁśe viṁśatime vṛṣṇiṣu prāpya nāmanī, rāma-kṛṣṇāvīti bhuvo bhagavān aharad bharam..* 1.3.23

the inner mechanism is a *single* reality it is treated as four in view of its fourfold mode (*vytti*) [viz, *saṃkalpa* (speculation), *niścaya* (certainty), *abhimāna* (egotism) and *adhyavasāya* (resolution)].²⁶ But the inner mechanism as a single reality with four modes is a typically *Vedāntic* concept; and, it is difficult to adjust it in the *Sāṃkhya* scheme of categories, adopted by the *Bhāgavata* to explain the cosmic evolution. In the *Sāṃkhya* scheme of the evolution of categories, *Mahat*, the first evolute of *Prakṛti*, is called *Buddhi* or *Citta* when viewed in its individual aspect.²⁷ From *Mahat* emerges *Ahaṃkāra* and from the latter *Manas*. If, according to this scheme of evolution, *Buddhi* and *Citta* refer to the same reality viz, the first evolute of *Prakṛti* taken in its individualistic aspect, then the adjustment of the fourfold manifestation of Viṣṇu to man's inner mechanism which forms a part of the general scheme of *Sāṃkhya* evolution, becomes difficult. In fact, in its attempt to do so, the *Bhāgavata* had to eliminate Pradyumna. For example, the *Bhāgavata* affirms Vāsudeva, the first *Vyūha*, against *Citta* (or *Buddhi*),²⁸ *Samkarṣaṇa*, the second *Vyūha*, against *Ahaṃkāra*²⁹ and Aniruddha, the fourth *Vyūha*, against *Manas*. But the *Bhāgavata* is silent over Pradyumna in this context, although he figures in the Doctrine of Emanation.³⁰ Śrīdhara treats *Buddhi* and *Citta* separately and assigns Pradyumna to *Buddhi* and Vāsudeva to *Citta*.³¹ This would mean that in the *Sāṃkhya* scheme of evolution *Buddhi* emerges from *Ahaṃkāra*; for, the emergence of Pradyumna from *Samkarṣaṇa* who is linked up with *Ahaṃkāra* requires that *Buddhi* to which Pradyumna is to be associated has to emerge

²⁶ *mano buddhir ahaṃkāraś cittam ityantarātmakam. catur-dhā lakṣyate bhēdo vyttīā lakṣaṇa-rūpayā..* 3.26.14

²⁷ *ādhatta vīryaṃ sāsūta mahat-tattvaṃ hiraṇmayam. yad āhur vāsudevā'khyāṃ cittam tan mahad-ātmakam..* 3.26.19 cd, 21 cd

²⁸ *yad āhur vāsudevā'khyāṃ cittam..* 3.26.21

²⁹ *mahat-tattvād vikurvāṇād bhagavad-vīrya-coditāt. kriyā-śaktir ahaṃkāraś trividhaḥ samapadyata.. sahasra-śiraśaṃ sākṣād yam anantaṃ pracakṣate. saṃkarṣaṇā'khyāṃ puruṣaṃ bhūtendriya-mano-mayam..* 3.26.23-25

³⁰ *vāsudevāḥ saṃkarṣaṇaḥ pradyumnaḥ puruṣaḥ svayam. aniruddha iti brahmaṇ mūrti-vyūho'bhidhiyate..* 12.11.21

³¹ Śrīdhara on 3.26.21, quoted above; ref. 28

correspondingly from *Ahaṁkāra*. But nowhere does the *Bhāgavata* seem to propose such a scheme of cosmic evolution, although the involutionary process indicates such succession.³²

A more plausible adjustment seems to have been suggested by the *Bhāgavata* by resorting to a different concept of the fourfold manifestation. The four manifestations of Viṣṇu are conceived as the witnesses of the four states of the empirical ego.³³ Thus Aniruddha is the witness of the waking state, Pradyumna of dream, Saṁkarṣaṇa of dreamless sleep and Vāsudeva of the transcendental state. This perspective of the *Vyūhas* is similar to the previous view in that in both the views the *Vyūhas* are conceived as witnesses (*sākṣin*) who without being involved in empirical life, control the empirical ego with the aid of their intrinsic knowledge (*īkṣā* or *Cit-śakti*). But the two views differ in that the former is an inadequate attempt to link the *Vyūhas* with the categories of creation while the latter has been able to establish a consistent relationship between the four *Vyūhas* and the four states of the empirical ego.

Out of the historical nucleus, indicated above, the Doctrine of the four *Vyūhas* had an opulent growth at the hand of the *Tāntrikas*³⁴ i.e., the upholders of the *Sātvata* Cult. They imbued the Great Personality with pictorial grandeur falling under four well-defined heads: distribution of limbs (*aṅga*), the accessories like vehicle, attendants and so on (*upāṅga*), the weapons (*āyudha*) He bears, and the garments and ornaments (*ākālpa*) He wears. The *Bhāgavata*, of course, sublimates these physical concepts to the plane of metaphysical symbols. For example the peerless jewel *Kaustubha* is nothing but the empirical ego held fast to His bosom; *Vana-mālā*, the variegated garland, is the tripartite *Prakṛti* and so on.³⁵ It may be noted here that, in this context of metaphysical interpretation of the four aspects of pictorial grandeur, the *Bhāgavata* states the

³² *indriyāṇi mano buddhiḥ saha vaikārikair nṛpa.
pravṛṣanti hyahamkāraṁ sva-guṇair aham-ātmani..* 11.3.15

³³ *sa viśvas taijasaḥ prājñas turīya iti vṛttibhiḥ.
arthendriyāśaya-jñānair bhagavān paribhāvayate..* 12.11.22

³⁴ *tāntrikāḥ paricaryāyām kevalasya śriyaḥ pateḥ.
aṅgopāṅgā'yudhā'kalpaṁ kalpayanti yathā ca yaiḥ.* 12.11.2

³⁵ 12.11.10-20.

Doctrine of the four *Vyūhas*. One wonders whether the four *Vyūhas* were the natural outcome of the Doctrine of four aspects subsequently grafted on the historical Kṛṣṇa and his descendants. One cannot swear as well that the four hands of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu did not emerge as symbols for His act of sustenance of the world in four different forms—Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa etc. In fact the *doctrine of four* seems to have developed itself in different directions, giving rise to the four aspects of the Great Personality, His *four* manifestations, the *fourfold* witnessing of the *four* states of the empirical self and what not.³⁶

The historical Kṛṣṇa crystallized himself into Vāsudeva.³⁷ From the status of a human being he was thus sublimated to the transcendental reality, the tranquil, immutable, self-luminous Truth that served as the source of the cosmic lotus blooming into creation.³⁸ His ineffable essence shines upon *Citta* of man.³⁹ But the dark colour of the historical Kṛṣṇa, comparable with the glossy darkness of the rainy cloud, was too conspicuous to be ruled out by the white or golden colour which as influenced by *sattva*, he should be expected to possess. Vāsudeva had four hands, a sweet well-cut face and was made of the quint-essence of all beauties.⁴⁰ Saṁkarṣaṇa did not attain the chiselled beauty and proportionate dimension of Vāsudeva. He still exhibited the early stage of his identification with *Puruṣa*, the thousand-headed, although as the witness of *Ahaṁkāra*, the direct source of diversity, his conception as the thousand-headed *Puruṣa* is quite appropriate. In association with the *Nāga-cult*, Saṁkarṣaṇa is identified with *Ananta*⁴¹, the lord of serpents⁴²

³⁶ *aṅgopāṅgā'yudhā'kalpair bhagavāṁs tac catuṣṭayam. bibharti sma catur-mūrtir bhagavān harir īvaraḥ..* 12.11.23

³⁷ *yaḥ paraṁ rahasaḥ sāksāt tri-guṇāc jīva-saṁjñitāt. bhagavantaṁ vāsudevam prapannaḥ sa priyo hi me..* 4.24.28

³⁸ *namaḥ pañcaka-nābhāya bhūta-sūkṣmendriyātmane. vāsudevāya śāntāya kūṣasthāya sva-rociṣe..* 4.24.34

³⁹ *yad āhur vāsudevā'khyam cittaṁ tan mahad-ātmakam. svacchatvam a-vikāritvam śāntatvam iti cetasaḥ..* 3.26.21 cd, 22 ab

⁴⁰ *snigdha-prāvṛḍ-ghana-śyāmaṁ sarva-saundarya-saṁgraham. cārvāyata-catur-bāhu-sujāta-rucirā'nanam..* 4.24.45

⁴¹ *yā vai kalā bhagavatas tāmasī samākhyātā ananta iti, śātvatīyā draṣṭṛ-dṛīyayoḥ saṁkarṣaṇam aham-ityabhimāna-lakṣaṇaṁ yaṁ saṁkarṣaṇa ityācakṣate..* 5.25.1

⁴² *yasyā'ṅghri-kamala..maṇḍaleṣu ahi-patayaḥ..sva-vadanāni.. vilokayanti* 5.25.4.

with his thousand heads (conceived as hoods) dazzling with one thousand crests.⁴³ God, reposing on His infinity, is metaphorically taken to rest on *Ananta*.⁴⁴ In fact, God's nature to serve as the substratum of all finds expression in *Ananta*, who, after all, is an *Amśa* of God. So, *Ananta* is at the bottom of the fourteen planes of existence as their perpetual sustainer.⁴⁵ The historical Bala-rāma is said to have saved the family of the Yadus from a split and so he earned for himself the designation of "saṁkarṣaṇa" (who puts together) as a token of admiration.⁴⁶ The *Bhāgavata* seems to have appropriated this idea to explain the nature of Saṁkarṣaṇa from the metaphysical point of view. Saṁkarṣaṇa as the witness of *Ahaṁkāra* is pleased to see that the empirical ego ties itself up to the world of pragmatic pleasures, with the sense of egotism (*abhimāna*). Saṁkarṣaṇa is so called because under his supervision this unification between the subject and the object is achieved.⁴⁷ The description of Saṁkarṣaṇa as an intemperate person,⁴⁸ and the mention of his colour as white as the mountain of crystal⁴⁹ are further illustrations of his historical relationship with Bala-rāma. But, in spite of the different elements that went into the moulding of the Saṁkarṣaṇa-concept, his personality as a *Vyūha* is well-established by the time of the *Bhāgavata*. As an *Amśa* of God,⁵⁰ Saṁkarṣaṇa possesses divine majesties

⁴³ *kiriṣa-sahasra-maṇi-praveka-pradyotitoddāma-phaṇā-sahasram.* 3.8.6d

⁴⁴ *dadarśa tad-bhoga-sukhā'sanaṁ vibhum.* 10.89.54a

⁴⁵ *evaṁ-prabhāvo bhagavān ananto
duranta-vīryoruguṇā nubhāvah.
mūle rasāyāḥ sthita āma-tantro
yo līlayā kṣamāṁ sthīṭaye bibharti..* 5.25.13

⁴⁶ *ayaṁ hi rohiṇī-putro ramayan suhṛdo guṇaiḥ.
ākhyāsyate rāma iti balā'dhikyād balaṁ viduḥ.
yadūnām a-pṛthag-bhāvāt saṁkarṣaṇam uśantyuta..* 10.8.12

⁴⁷ *draṣṭṛ-dṛśyayoḥ saṁkarṣaṇam aham-ityabhimāna-lakṣaṇam yaṁ
saṁkarṣaṇa ityācakṣate..* 5.25.1

⁴⁸ *upagīyamāna-carito vanitābhir halā'yudhaḥ.
vaneṣu vyacarat kṣībo mada-vihvala-locanaḥ..* 10.65.23

⁴⁹ *sitā'calā'bham* 10.89.53

⁵⁰ *saṁkarṣaṇam devam akunṭha-sattvam
svam eva dhiṣṇyaṁ bahu mānayaṇtām
yad vāsudevā'bhidham āmananti..* 3.8.3b, 4ab

(bhaga).⁵¹ Gifted with unclouded vision⁵² he is in substance none other than God.⁵³ We do not hear much of Pradyumna excepting his reference in the group of the four *Vyūhas*. At one place⁵⁴ the *Bhāgavata* describes Pradyumna to be the reality that works behind the revelation of the universe as the controller of the inner mechanism. As *Buddhi* (intellect) is the revealer, Śrīdhara naturally takes this passage to mean that Pradyumna is the witness of *Buddhi*. But we have seen that there is difficulty in accepting this position. Or perhaps, one might say that the term "*buddhi*" stands here for *Jñāna-śakti*, the cognitive aspect of *Ahaṁkāra*; and, Pradyumna is conceived as the witness thereof. Aniruddha is the witness of mind and is described to be as dark as the autumnal blue lotus. Being the witness of the mind he is the lord of the organs; for, all organs obey the mandates of the mind.⁵⁵ As thoughts are communicated through appropriate sounds, thoughts are taken to be the primordial forms of sounds; and, as thoughts originate from mind, the latter is conceived as the source of all sounds. Aniruddha as the witness of the mind is therefore taken to be the ultimate ground of all sounds.⁵⁶ Aniruddha is conceived to dwell in *Jana-loka*, beyond the three worlds; from the unblemished region (*śveta-dvīpa*) that forms a part of *Jana-loka* and where actually Aniruddha lives, flows the spring of eternal sounds embodied in the treasure-house of ancient wisdom, the *Vedas*.⁵⁷

The Doctrine of fourfold Emanation seems to have undergone further development as the Doctrine of ninefold

⁵¹ *tāmasīm mūrtim ātmanaḥ saṁkarṣaṇa-samjñām... bhava upadhāvati. bhaje bhajenyāraṇa-pāda-paṅkajaṁ bhagasya kṛtsnasya param parāyaṇam..* 5.17.16, 18ab

⁵² *na yasya māyā-guṇa-citta-vṛttibhir nirikṣato hyaṇvapi dṛṣṭir aḥyate.* 5.17.19ab

⁵³ cf. 5.25.7

⁵⁴ *namo viśva-prabodhāya pradyumnāyāntar-ātmane.* 4.24.35cd

⁵⁵ *yad vidur hyaniruddhā'khyam hṛṣīkāṇām adhiṣṭvaram. śārādendīvara-śyāmaṁ samrādhyaṁ yogibhiḥ śanaiḥ..* 3.26.28

⁵⁶ *yaḥ sātva-tām kāma-dugho'niruddhaḥ yam āmananti sma hi śabda-yoniṁ manomayaṁ sattva-turiya-tattvam..* 3.1.34bcd

⁵⁷ *śveta-dvīpaṁ gataḥ tvayi draṣṭum tad īṣvaram. brahma-vādaḥ susaṁvṛttaḥ śrutayo yatra śerate..* 10.87.10abcd
Śrīdhara comments:— *īṣvaram* = *aniruddha-mūrtim*

Emanation. Indications are available from the *Bhāgavata* as to how the latter gradually evolved from the idea of 'four aspects' of the Great Personality (*aṅga*, *upāṅga* etc.). The *Bhāgavata* introduces the description of the distribution of limbs of the Great Personality with the preamble that He is liable to differentiation into limbs in the shape of the first nine principles responsible for the existence of the cosmic lump (*virāj*).⁵⁸ These first nine principles are, as we are already aware, *Prakṛti*, *Mahat*, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Manas* and the five *Tanmātras*. If we remember how the four *Vyūhas* are conceived in relation to the categories of creation, it is no wonder if these nine categories would give rise to the Doctrine of ninefold Emanation. And, as we may notice that the categories related to the four Emanations are included here in the first nine principles, we can naturally presume that the Doctrine of nine is an extension of the Doctrine of four. But the Doctrine of nine does not appear to be a mere elaboration of the Doctrine of four. If we accept the names mentioned by Śrīdhara as the nine 'forms' of the *Sātvatas*,⁵⁹ then, beside five others viz, *Nārāyaṇa*, *Hayagrīva*, *Varāha*, *Nṛsiṃha* and *Brahmā*, the four *Vyūhas* also—*Vāsudeva* etc.—find recognition in this group of nine. In this new set-up *Vāsudeva* becomes related to *Prakṛti*, *Samkarṣaṇa* to *Mahat*, *Pradyumna* to *Ahaṁkāra* and *Aniruddha* to *Manas*. The other five are related to the five elements. The scheme seems to avoid the inconsistency traceable in the Doctrine of four, by finding correspondence between the nine *Vyūhas* and the nine categories of creation. Relation of *Vāsudeva* with *Avyakta* or *Prakṛti*, as envisaged in this scheme, explains more plausibly the concept of *Nārāyaṇa* lying in the ocean of the primal cause, often referred to in the *Bhāgavata*. In the case of first nine principles being *Puruṣa*, *Prakṛti*, *Mahat*, *Ahaṁkāra* and the five elements, as the *Bhāgavata* has enumerated in another context⁶⁰, the correspondence is carried another step forward so that *Vāsudeva* is linked up with *Puruṣa*, *Samkarṣaṇa* with

⁵⁸ *māyā'dyair navabhis tattvair sa vikāra-mayo virāj*. 12.11.5ab

⁵⁹ *sātvatām nava-mūrtinām ādi-mūrtir ahaṁ paraḥ*. 11.16.32cd

⁶⁰ *puruṣaḥ prakṛtir vyaktam ahaṁkāro nabho'nilaḥ*.

jyotir āpaḥ kṣitir iti tattvānyuktāni me nava.. 11.22.14

Prakṛti, Pradyumna with *Mahat* and Aniruddha with *Ahaṁkāra*. But in any case this Doctrine of nine seems to differ from the Doctrine of four: While the former becomes associated with creation the latter is purely confined to the illumination of the inner mechanism of man. From this point of view the Doctrine of nine may be taken as a less exalted growth than the Doctrine of four.

Another concept of the Doctrine of nine is available in the *Bhāgavata* in relation to the sun-god that constitutes the essence of Viṣṇu.⁶¹ Under the auspices of the sun-god is held sacrifice consisting in nine parts—time, place, rites, the priests, the materials, sacrifice itself, the *Mantras*, the oblations and the result accruing from the performance of sacrifice.⁶² This is apparently a Doctrine of nine in terms of sacrifice and is associated with the sun on the presumption of basic identity between the sacrificial fire—the pivot of sacrifice—and the sun-god. It thus differs from the previous Doctrine of nine because it has nothing to do with the evolution of the cosmic process excepting perhaps that human destiny (*Karman*) has been accepted by the *Bhāgavata* to be a regulating factor of the cosmic evolution. But in any case this idea of nine is obviously materialistic and can hardly claim recognition as a refined Doctrine of the ninefold Emanation.

Perhaps the Doctrine of twelve is more acceptable than this latter Doctrine of nine. The sun-god is taken to protect the world throughout the year and he is conceived to be different in each month of the year.⁶³ At the conclusion the twelve forms of the sun-god are, of course, called "*vibhūtiḥ*"⁶⁴ although the *Bhāgavata* introduces them as *Vyūhas*.⁶⁵

Of these Doctrines of four, nine and twelve, by virtue of tranquil sublimity that removes silently the baser elements from the human mind and thus raises it to the sphere of delicate purity that can reflect the transcendental being of God, the

⁶¹ *vyūhaṁ sūryā'tmano hareḥ*. 12.11.28d

⁶² *kālo deśaḥ kriyāḥ kartā karaṇaṁ kāryam āgamaḥ.
dravyaṁ phalam iti brahman navadhokto'jayā hariḥ*. 12.11.31

⁶³ *madhvādiṣu dvādaśasu bhagavān kāla-rūpa-dhṛk.
loka-tantrāya carati pṛthag dvādaśabhir gaṇaiḥ*. 12.11.32

⁶⁴ *etā bhagavato viṣṇor ādityasya vibhūtayaḥ*. 12.11.45ab

⁶⁵ *vyūhaṁ sūryā'tmano hareḥ*. 12.11.28d

Doctrine of four has undeniably the most abiding influence on religious imagination.

Distinguished from the fourfold Emanation is Hiranya-garbha who should now engage our attention. From Śrīdhara's point of view he is the reflection of prototype-Brahmā on *rajas*; and, as the reflection affected by *rajas* he is treated as a *Jīva* with specific assignment in the cosmic process. In terms of the *Bhāgavata*, Hiranya-garbha is a *Kalā* of prototype-Brahmā, the *Guṇā'vatāra*. Because, while prototype-Brahmā being an *Amśa* is God Himself, Hiranya-garbha being a *Jīva* and so heterogeneous in nature from his prototype, should be a *Kalā*. Again, as Vāsudeva *Vyūha* is but God Himself so Hiranya-garbha may be looked upon as a *Kalā* of Vāsudeva as well. Nevertheless, Hiranya-garbha has the privilege of being the first *Jīva*⁶⁶; and, being the first of his kind he is declared as *aja* i.e., not born of a father of the same kind.⁶⁷ Being *Jīva* he is naturally divested of divine knowledge. Knowledge he possesses is a borrow from Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu whose *Kalā* he is.⁶⁸ The *Bhāgavata* often refers to what had existed before creation started. There was Viṣṇu, reposing on His infinite nature and engrossed in His spiritual slumber (*yoga-nīdrā*). Then, with the expression of Divine will to create, arose from the centre (*nābhi*) of the Infinite a finiteness, pictorially described as the cosmic lotus. Hiranya-garbha was a part of that finiteness in that the lotus was his original home. He was called Hiranya-garbha because the said lotus of golden colour (*hiranya*) served as his embryo (*garbha*). Eventually he was awakened by the animation of God but with limited knowledge he beheld none excepting his own self. Then, God goaded him to undergo penance which he did for a long long

⁶⁶ *hiranya-garbhāṁ ... ādi-puruṣam .. iti hovāca*. 5.1.9, 10
brahmā'dayas tanu-bhṛto bahir-artha-bhāvāḥ. 11.7.17d

⁶⁷ *ajo'nubaddhaḥ sa guṇair ajāyāḥ* 10.40.3c
Śrīdhara — *so'jaḥ = Brahmā'pi*

⁶⁸ *tad-dattayā vayunayedam acaṣṭa viśvaṁ*
supta-prabuddha iva nātha bhavat-prapannaḥ. 4.9.8ab
bhavantam śaraṇam prapanno = brahmā (Śrīdhara)

period of one thousand divine years.⁶⁹ As a result, knowledge dawned on him as a divine gift. He could now visualize the ideal forms of the fourteen worlds which he was to create,⁷⁰ like a fig on his palm.⁷¹ Fortified with this knowledge⁷² he was now rightly called the first hermit.⁷³ It was divine grace that gave him physical, mental and spiritual strength.⁷⁴ Hiranya-garbha then set his hand to creation and eventually created the fourteen worlds.⁷⁵ The above allegory shows the insignificant existence of Hiranya-garbha by the side of God.⁷⁶ As a *Kalā* or particle he is conceived to have emerged from God, like a spark from fire.⁷⁷ The penance of Hiranya-garbha

⁶⁹ *sa ādi-devo jagatām paro guruḥ
sva-dhiṣṇyam āsthāya sisṛkṣyaikṣata
taṁ nā'dhyagacchad dṛṣṭam atra sammatām
prapañca-nirmāṇa-vidhir yayā bhavet.
sa cintayan dvyakṣaram ekadā'mbha-
syupāśṛnod dvir gaditaṁ vaco vibhuḥ.
sparṣeṣu yat śodalam eka-vimlām
niṣ-kiñcinānām nṛpa yad dhanam viduḥ..
nīlāmya tad vaktra-didṛkṣayā dilo
vilokya tatrā'nyad apaśyamānaḥ.
sva-dhiṣṇyam āsthāya vimṛṣya tad-dhitaṁ
tapasyupādīṣṭa ivā'dadhe manaḥ..
divyaṁ sahasrā'bdam amogha-darīano
jīta'nīlā'tmā vijitobhayendriyaḥ.
atapayata smā'khila-loka-tāpanam
tapas tapiyāms tapatām samāhitaḥ..
tasmai sva-lokaṁ bhāgavān sabhājitaḥ
sandarlayāmāsa param na yat param.
vyapeta-samkleśa-vimoha-sādhvasaṁ
sva-dṛṣṭavadbhiḥ puruṣair abhiṣṭutam.. 2.9.5-9*

⁷⁰ *yena sva-rociṣā viśvaṁ rocitaṁ rocyāmyaham.
yathā'rko'gnir yathā somo yatharkṣa-graha-tārakāḥ.. 2.5.11*

⁷¹ *sarvaṁ hyetaḍ bhavān veda bhūta-bhavya-bhavat-prabhuḥ.
kāra'malaka-vad viśvaṁ vijñānā'vasitaṁ tava.. 2.5.3*

⁷² *namo vijñāna-vīryāya 3.15.5a*

⁷³ *ṛṣim ādyam na badhnāti pāpiyāms tvāṁ rajo-guṇaḥ. 3.9.35ab*

⁷⁴ *na bhārati me'nga mṛṣopalakṣyate
na vai kvacin me manaso mṛṣā gatiḥ.
na me hṛṣīkāpi patantyasaṭ-pathe
yan me hṛdautkaṇṭhyavatā dhṛto hariḥ.. 2.6.34*

⁷⁵ *3.8.10-33*

⁷⁶ *kvā'haṁ tamo-mahad-ahaṁ-kha-carā'gni-vār-bhū-
samveṣṭitāṇḍa-ghaṭa-sapta-vitasti-kāyaḥ.
kvedṛg-vidhā'vigaṇitā'ṇḍa-parāṇu-caryā-
vātā'dhva-roma-vivarasya ca te mahitvam.. 10.14.11*

⁷⁷ *māyāṁ vitatyekṣitum ātma-vaibhavam
tvahaṁ kiyaṁ aiccham ivā'rcir agnau.. 10.14.9cd*

consummated in the acquisition of knowledge which is nothing but *Cit-śakti*.⁷⁸

The concept of Hiranya-garbha is found in connection with two different types of creation—the subtle and the gross. In the subtle creation he is found to embody *Mahat*, the first principle to evolve from *Prakṛti*. In the gross he is associated with the cosmic lump that differentiates itself into the fourteen worlds. In the subtle he may be conceived to be a *Kāla* of the Nārāyaṇa lying in the causal water (*kāraṇa'rṇava-śāyin*) which can be identified with primordial matter (*Prakṛti*). In the gross he is the *Kalā* of the Nārāyaṇa lying in the water from which rises the cosmic lump (*garbhoda-śāyin*). Hiranya-garbha, associated with the gross, may be conceived to embody the fourteen worlds that constitute the gross creation.⁷⁹ As the best of all empirical souls including gods, this Hiranya-garbha dwells in the highest world, *Satya-loka*⁸⁰ and possesses the maximum longevity called *dvi-parārdha*. He has his royal hall at the crest of *Sumeru*, the mountain of gold⁸¹, and has a white swan as his vehicle. These last two elements help to recognise him as the sun as really he is.⁸² From the standpoint of the evolution of thought, one might then say that out of the physical sun emerged in time the concept of Viṣṇu, which underwent further differentiation in the idea of Hiranya-garbha. The myth of the emergence of Hiranya-garbha from Viṣṇu, as indicated above, is then a pictorial record of this development of thought that stands for the differentiation of Hiranya-garbha from Viṣṇu.

The process of differentiation proceeds to an important point with the concept of Rudra. Rudra has an unbroken and chequered history of his own from the days of the *Ṛg-Veda*. In the *Ṛg-Veda*, Rudra is a mighty aerial god, 'the god of storm considered mainly in the form of lightning' and

⁷⁸ *tapo me hṛdayam* 2.9.22c

hṛdayam = *antar-aṅgā śaktiḥ* ... *yasya jñāna-mayaṁ tapaḥ*
(Mun U 1.1.9) *iti śruteḥ*—Śrīdhara

⁷⁹ *vyaktam vibho sthūlam idaṁ larīram* 7.3.33a

⁸⁰ *tāvāśvāsya jagat-sraṣṭā kumārāḥ saha nāradaḥ.*

haṁso haṁsena yānena tri-dhāma-paramaṁ yayau. 3.24.20

⁸¹ *tato brahma-sabhāṁ jagmur meror mūrdhani sarvaśaḥ.* 8.5.18ab

⁸² *myte'ṇde eja etasmin yad abhūt tato mātaṇḍa iti vyapadeśaḥ.*
hiranya-garbha iti yad hiraṇyā'ṇḍa-samudbhavaḥ. 5.20.44

in importance next only to Viṣṇu. He is conceived to be as bright as the sun and shining like gold.⁸³ He takes man from the pale of death to immortality. He is also stated to be associated with three mothers (*tryambaka*).⁸⁴ As the god of liberation he is naturally taken to be auspicious.⁸⁵ But in the *Rg-Veda*, Rudra is also conceived to be an angry god; and, prayers are laid at his door to appease his wrath⁸⁶ so that he may refrain from killing the near and dear ones.⁸⁷ Viewed in the light of this deadly aspect, Rudra can very well be identified with fire.⁸⁸ In the *Yajur-Veda*, his auspicious character is confirmed.⁸⁹ On the basis of his identification with fire he acquires the designation "dark-red" (*nīla-lohita*).⁹⁰ His other names are "*paśu-pati*", "*bhava*", "*śarva*", "*iśāna*", "*mahā-deva*" etc., suggestive of his different associations.⁹¹ His prominence is duly recognised in that he is stated to have spread himself out in innumerable forms on the earth.⁹² Although some of these forms are auspicious, others are terrible. In his terrible aspect, Rudra seems to have developed association with the Serpent Cult and also with the ghastly tribal god. Thus the *Yajur-Veda* describes Rudra regulating the serpents⁹³ and championing the cause of the knaves and the swindlers.⁹⁴ By the period of the *Brāhmaṇas* there are indications of decline of

⁸³ *yaḥ śukra iva sūryo hiraṇyam iva rocate
īreṣṭho devānāṃ vasuḥ.* RV 1.43.5

⁸⁴ *tyambakam yajāmahe* RV 7.59.12
Keith RPVU p. 149 refers to the differences of opinion as to the meaning of the term 'tryambaka'.

⁸⁵ *śaṁ naḥ karati* RV 1.43.6

⁸⁶ *mā tvā rudra cukrudhāmā namobhiḥ.* RV 2.33.4

⁸⁷ *mā no mahāntam uta mā no arbhakam
mā na ukṣantam uta mā na ukṣitam.
mā no vadhiḥ pītaram mota mātaram
mā naḥ priyās tanvo rudra ririṣaḥ..* RV 1.114.7

⁸⁸ *agne rudro* RV 2.1.6

⁸⁹ *namaḥ sambhavāya ca mayobhavāya ca
namaḥ śamkarāya ca mayaskarāya ca.
nama śivāya ca śivatarāya ca.* VS 16.41

⁹⁰ *nīla-grīvo vilohitaḥ* VS 16.7

⁹¹ *agim.. paśupatim.. bhavam.. śarvam.. iśānam.. mahādevam* VS 39.8

⁹² *asamkhyātā sahasrāṇi ye rudrā adhi bhūmyām* VS 16.54

⁹³ *ahimś ca sarvān jambhayan* VS 16.5

⁹⁴ *namo.. taskarāṇām pataye .. muṣṇatām pataye namaḥ.* VS 16.21

his status. With the rise of *Prajāpati* as a supreme god, Rudra is said to have originated due to him.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Rudra was still a god of glory, who maintained a unique balance between an auspicious god and a deadly god.

The *Bhāgavata* has absorbed the cardinal aspects of the Vedic Rudra, to go into the formation of its Rudra concept. Rudra is born of angry Brahmā from the centre of his eyebrows, the focal point of his anger, and was named "dark-red" (*nīla-lohita*).⁹⁶ Being as good a *Jīva* as Brahmā (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) Rudra was his *Aṁśa*; and he was a *Kalā* of *Samkarṣaṇa*⁹⁷ because of their mutual difference in kind. Rudra emerging from Brahmā is legitimately identified with *Ahaṁkāra*; because while Brahmā (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) embodies *Mahat*, Rudra, the son of Brahmā, should embody the son of *Mahat* i.e., *Ahaṁkāra*.⁹⁸ As *Ahaṁkāra* admits of three types—*sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*—Rudra embodying each of these characters should be called tranquil (*śānta*), active (*rajo-juṣ*) and terrible (*ghora*) respectively.⁹⁹ As the three aspects of *Ahaṁkāra* serve as the matrixes of the universe, Rudra associated with them should be called "*tryambaka*". Rudra linked up with *sāttvika Ahaṁkāra* is conceived as a great spiritualist. He is taken to be the exponent of the *Yoga* system of thought. Constantly engrossed in transcendental bliss,¹⁰⁰ his sublime personality rises above the trifles of worldly life. Though as a *Jīva* he was liable to human frailties¹⁰¹ he gradual-

⁹⁵ AīB 3.3.9

⁹⁶ *dhiyā nigrhyamāṇo'pi bhrūvor madhyāt prajāpateḥ. sadyo'jāyata tan-manyuḥ kumāro nīla-lohitaḥ..* 3.12.7

⁹⁷ *yasya'dya āśid guṇa-vigraho mahān vijñāna-dhiṣṇyo bhagavān ajaḥ kila. yat-sambhavo'haṁ tri-ṛtāḥ sva-tejasā vaikārikaṁ tāmasam aindriyaṁ sṛje..* 5.17.22
yasya=samkarṣaṇasya.

⁹⁸ *śivaḥ śakti-yutaḥ śaśvat tri-liṅgo guṇa-samvṛtaḥ. vaikārikas taijasaś ca tāmasaś cetyahaṁ tri-dhā.. tato vikāra abhavan śodaiśā'miṣu kañcana. upadhāvan vibhūtinām sarvāsām aśnute gatim..* 10.88.4

⁹⁹ *namaḥ śivāya śāntāya sattvāya pramṛdāya ca. raro-juṣe'tha ghorāya namas tubhyaṁ tamo-juṣe..* 12.10.17

¹⁰⁰ *taṁ brahma-nirvāṇa-samādhim āśritam vyupāśritam girisaṁ yoga-kakṣam.* 4.6.39ab

¹⁰¹ *skanne retasi so'paśyad ātmānam deva-māyayā. jādikṛtaṁ nṛpa-śreṣṭha saṁnyavartata kaśmalāt..* 8.12.35

ly rose to the zenith of his penance and thus transcended pragmatic life.¹⁰² He was detached, because he rose above *Māyā*.¹⁰³ With disinterested outlook,¹⁰⁴ he fulfils desires¹⁰⁵ and is thus the blessing of the blessings.¹⁰⁶ In his *rājasa* aspect, Rudra is a cosmic progenitor—indeed, the source of different categories of progenitors, like Marīci, Atri etc.¹⁰⁷—and is thus declared to be the best of all progenitors.¹⁰⁸ From Rudra, called *Nīla-lohita*,¹⁰⁹ emerge innumerable progenitors; but eleven of them have gained prominence by virtue of their association with the categories that emerge from *Ahaṁkāra* when creative process is on. If, on the basis of their common character viz, the cognitive faculty (*jñāna-śakti*) the five sense organs are counted as a single unit and similarly on the basis of common character viz, conative faculty (*kriyā-śakti*) the five action organs are taken as another unit, then the emergents of *Ahaṁkāra*, viz, the mind, the unit of sense organs, the unit of action organs and the five elements would make eight realities. And, if we add to the list the sun, the moon and penance, each of which is akin to Rudra in point of their glow and strength, then the number swells to eleven. Embodying each of these elements Rudra may be called as having elevenfold *Vyūhas*, the eleven forms standing for the unique substance of Rudra.¹¹⁰ As

¹⁰² Brahmā said to Rudra:—

*tapa ātiṣṭha bhadraṁ te sarva-bhūta-sukhā'vaham.
tapasaiva yathā pūrvaṁ sṛṣṭā viśvam idaṁ bhavaṁ..* 3.12.18

¹⁰³ Viṣṇu said to Girīśa:—

*ko nu me'titaren māyāṁ viśaktas toad ṛte pumān.
tāṁs tām viṣṭjatiṁ bhāvān dusterāṁ akṛtā'tmabhiḥ..
seyam guṇa-mayī māyā na tvām abhibhaviṣyati.
mayā sametā kālena kāla-rūpeṇa bhāgaśaḥ..* 8.12.39-40

¹⁰⁴ *kaś taṁ carā'cara-gurum nir-vairam śānta-vigraham.
ātmā'rāmaṁ katham dveṣṭi jagato daivataṁ mahat..* 4.2.2

¹⁰⁵ *namasye tvām mahādeva lokānām gurum īṣvaram.
pūnśām a-pūrṇa-kāmanām kāma-pūrā'marā'ṅghri-pam..* 10.62.5

¹⁰⁶ *esām anu-dhyeya-padā'bja-yugmaṁ
jagad-gurum maṅgala-maṅgalaṁ svayam..* 6.17.13ab

¹⁰⁷ *grhāṇaitāni nāmāni sthānāni ca sa-joṣaṇaḥ.
ebhiḥ sṛja prajā bahviḥ prajānām asi yat patiḥ..* 3.12.14
The different categories of creation are described in 3.12.21-29

¹⁰⁸ *bhāvānām bhagavān bhavaḥ prītyā'caṣṭa:—
ahaṁ kalānām ṛṣabhaḥ..* 8.12.42b, 43c

¹⁰⁹ *rudrāṇām nīla-lohitaḥ..* 11.16.13d

¹¹⁰ *hyd-indriyāṇyasur vyoma vāyur agnir jalam mahī.
sūryaś candraś tapaś caiva sthānānyagre kṛtāni te..* 3.12.11

the master of the five elements he is also called *Bhūta-pati*.¹¹¹ The *Bhāgavata* also gives the specific names of the eleven Rudras and their corresponding feminine powers.¹¹² Through Rudra, Brahṁā (Hiraṇya-garbha) is called the primal progenitor.

In his *tāmasa* aspect Rudra became largely overshadowed by Non-Aryan characters. His association with snakes, garment of tiger-skin, crude tribal weapons, human skulls and filthy habits like wandering in the cremation ground, earned for him strong censure from the *Vedic* circle and his position as the supreme progenitor was threatened by Dakṣa who by that time rose to eminence as one of the best of progenitors.¹¹³ He was refused for a time his due share in a *Vedic* sacrifice. In fact, Rudra was treated as an outcaste unfit to sit by the side of other gods in a sacrificial invitation. But then, by the exhibition of his dreadful outrages, he was able to ensure for himself a share, left over to him after the other gods had had their respective shares.¹¹⁴ But while the other gods were assigned a place in the east, Rudra was given a place in the north. He thus became the lord of Kailāsa and married the daughter of the Himālayas. He was then *giri-śa*—lying on the mountain. The *tāmasa* aspect of Rudra is told by the *Bhāgavata* in the garb of a myth.¹¹⁵ The moral of the myth is clear: The non-*Vedic* character of Rudra had swamped for some time his Aryan origin. The eminence he used to enjoy had led him to this pitfall of being absorbed by non-Aryan cult and the religious organisation that developed round his figure was consequently denounced¹¹⁶ and proscribed. Eventually, of course, he regained his position in the *Vedic* fold when gradually people

¹¹¹ *yat tvaṁ ṣaṣṭhaḥ pañcabhir bhāsi bhūtaiḥ*. 4.7.37d

¹¹² *manyur manur mahinaso mahān chiva ṛta-dhvajaḥ.*
ugra-retā bhavaḥ kālo vāma-devo dhṛta-vrataḥ.
dhīr dhṛti rasalomā ca niyut sarpir ilāmbikā.
irāvati-śvadhā-dīkṣā rudrāṇyo rudra te striyaḥ.. 3.12.12-13

¹¹³ *prajāpatinām dakṣo'ham* 11.16.15a

¹¹⁴ *eṣa te rudra bhāgo'stu yad ucchiṣṭo'dhvarasya vai.*
yajñas te rudra bhāgena kalpatām ādya yajña-han.. 4.6.53

¹¹⁵ 4.2-7

¹¹⁶ *bhava-vrata-dharā ye ca ye ca tān samanuvratāḥ.*
pāṇḍinas te bhavantu sac-chāstra-paripanthinaḥ.
naṣṭa-saucā mūḍha-dhīyo jaṭā-bharmā'sthi-dhāriṇaḥ.
vasantu śiva-dīkṣāyām yatra daivam surā'savam.. 4.2.28-29

could recognize in him his original character of a *sāttvika* god and his really *Vedic* heredity.

Apart from this *tāmasa* character which is largely a reproduction of a non-Aryan deity, Rudra has another phase of his *tāmasa* nature, relevant to the cosmic function which, in his case, is annihilation of the universe. As universe meant originally the three worlds—the earth, the air and the sky—Rudra is said to destroy the three worlds when, in terms of the *Bhāgavata*, *Naimittika-pralaya* takes place. In order to dissociate this concept of Rudra from the previous concept with tribal bearing, the *Bhāgavata* describes how just at the time of deluge emerged Rudra from Saṁkarṣaṇa.¹¹⁷ This Rudra, then, is not the supreme progenitor but the cosmic destroyer. The *Vedic* Rudra, 'the howling storm god associated with lightning and viewed in its destructive aspect', reasserts himself in this concept of Rudra. The *Bhāgavata* describes how the three-eyed Rudra suddenly explodes into disastrous violence with a three-forked trident in his hand and how the howling winds agitate the ocean to mass-scale inundation.¹¹⁸ The trident is apparently the lightning and it is accompanied by the winds comparable to the different 'forms' of Rudra himself. Then from the mouth or the third eye of Rudra, fixed at the centre of his eye brows, is flung cosmic fire that reduces the three worlds to ashes.¹¹⁹ This is then the incarnation of Rudra as cosmic fire.¹²⁰ As we shall see the *Prākṛtika-pralaya* occurs at the end of the longevity of Brahmā (*Hiraṇya-garbha*) when creation dissolves into *Prakṛti* and finally *Ātyantika-pralaya* is achieved when the individual soul is liberated. Rudra's activity is then confined to the destruction of the three worlds which, for all practical purposes, constitute the universe.

¹¹⁷ *kālenopasañjihirṣato'marṣa-viracita-rucira-bhramad-bhruvor antareṇa saṁkarṣaṇo nāma rudra ekādaśa-vyūhas tryakṣas tri-śikhaṁ śūlam uttambhayan udatiṣṭhat.* 5.25.3

¹¹⁸ *tāvat tri-bhuvanāṁ sadyaḥ kalpāntaidhita-sindhavaḥ. plāvayantyutkaṣṭa'ṣopa-caṇḍa-vāteritormayaḥ.* 3.11.31

¹¹⁹ *atho anantasya mukhā'nalena sandahyamānaṁ sa nirikṣya viśvām.* 2.2.26ab

yas tvanta-kāle idam ātma-kṛtaṁ sva-netra-vahni-sphuliṅga-śikhayā bhasitaṁ na veda. 8.7.32cd

¹²⁰ *tataḥ kālā'gni-rudrā'tmā yat syṣṭam idam ātmanāḥ. sanniyacchati tat kāle ghanā'nikam ivā'nilah.* 2.10.43

In this way the Divine purpose that expressed itself in three aspects—creation, sustenance and destruction—completes its own circle; and, the whole process is knit into the texture of the Doctrine of Incarnation. But the different grades of Divine manifestation, as presented by the *Bhāgavata*, suggest immensely practical religious value. We may, for instance, begin from the other end and say that ordinary experience is confronted by the physical world as an unresponsive mass. But gradually ordinary experience, under the stress of religious emotion, crystallizes itself into the discovery of conscious principles animating the physical world. These principles we have described as cosmic progenitors. With further development of insight these principles drive fast towards a unity, the *Hiranya-garbha*. Then, away from the troubled ocean of worldliness, we gradually decipher in the rigour of worship the cosmic witness in the inner chamber of our mind—the fourfold *Vyūha*. But cosmic witness also points to an apprehension with reference to worldliness. So, this insight is transcended by the integral vision of the Transcendental self, the Great Personality of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. From this standpoint the Doctrine of Incarnation is a device to lead the practical soul from the trifles of the everyday world to the eternal land of bliss to share in the Divine Ecstasy perpetually renewing itself in its perennial glory and effulgence.

CHAPTER X

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PERSONAL GOD

THE PERSONAL GOD

The principle of heterogeneity (*Ātma-māyā*), itself the expression of Divine Will (*Viṣṇu-māyā*), undergoes, by the urge of Divine Sport, differentiation into two mutually co-operative yet contradictory powers viz, the principle of materiality (*Māyā*) and the principle of divinity (*Cit-śakti*); and, characterised by these two powers, *Brahman*, the substratum of *Ātma-māyā*, becomes immanent in creation. As residing in creation of composite nature (*pura*), *Brahman* is then called "*Puruṣa*" (God).

But does this imply the pre-existence of creation in which *Brahman* could be immanent? The opposite seems to be true because God is stated to have started creation; and, in order to do that He has had to pre-exist creation. How to solve this dilemma? From the *Bhāgavata* point of view the answer is that neither God nor creation pre-existed the other, but that both simultaneously came into existence. One has to accept this position because no other alternative does stand scrutiny: Creation as a harmonious design presupposes the intervention of an intelligent person. God cannot serve the purpose of such a person because He cannot be said to create the universe in the same way as the potter produces the pot. God cannot be linked up with creation in the ordinary sense of cause-and-effect because causality involves a *sequence* between the cause and the effect. The cause, to be able to produce the effect, has, among other things, to pre-exist the effect and the effect has to come later than the cause as a result of the causal operation. The element of *a-before-and-an-after* (i.e., *sequence*) means time. The proposed causal relationship between God and creation presupposes, then, the existence of time before creation had started. But time itself (as *sequence*) being a part of creation cannot afford to exist *before* creation. So, the

relationship between God and creation has to be interpreted not in terms of causality but in some other terms. From the *Bhāgavata* point of view creation is a differentiation of *Bhagavān*, the third grade of Reality. Free creativity of *Bhagavān* realises itself by bringing into existence both God and creation at a *single* instant i.e., without the intervention of time-sequence. As already stated, in the light of the Doctrine of Incarnation God and creation are all incarnations of *Bhagavān*.¹ But in so far as the boundless activity of *Bhagavān* was limited by the appearance of God as the *first* fact that He is called the first Incarnation and the universe emerging subsequent to the first fact is said to have been created by God. Thus God creates the universe in the sense that He manifests the universe which is already inherent in *Bhagavān*. This idea of causation as mere manifestation has been adopted by the *Bhāgavata* as a general rule as it has gone into the formation of the *Sāṃkhya* Theory of Causation.

The process of differentiation intended to explain the emergence of God and creation may be looked upon to have started beyond the world of matter. When the process of differentiation had begun to operate, the first incident was Viṣṇu, the second grade of Reality. The second incident to emerge directly from Viṣṇu was *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality. The third incident was God (*Puruṣa*) when *Brahman* became immanent in creation. God is thus distant from *Bhagavān* by three degrees (*aṃśāṃśāṃśa*).² Although *Bhagavān* is the ultimate source of all emergence, ranging from Viṣṇu to the smallest trifle of the physical creation, yet God, being an *Aṃśa* of *Brahman* which in substance is *Bhagavān*, is identical with *Bhagavān* and so is held to be the immediate source of hundreds of Incarnations. Entire physical creation is thus Incarnation

¹ *ādya'vatāraḥ puruṣaḥ parasya
kālaḥ svabhāvaḥ sadasan manaś ca.
dravyam vikāro guṇa indriyāṇi
virāt svarāt sthāṇu carīṇu bhūmnaḥ etc.* 2.6.42-45
Śrīdhara also observes in this context:— *sarveṣāṃ
avīśeṣa avatāratvam ucyate*

² *yasyāṃśāṃśāṃśa-bhāgena viśvotpatti-layodayāḥ.
bhavanti kila viśvātmanḥ taṁ tvādyāham gatiṁ gatā* 10.85.31

of *Bhagavān*. Already inherent in *Bhagavān*, creation is thus merely manifested by God who, as the first Incarnation in the empirical plane and also as the wielder of *Māyā* and *Cit-śakti*, is immensely equipped to do so.

God creates by mere will³ and His will is done.⁴ His *Māyā* transforms itself into the physical universe; and, as *Māyā* clings to God, the creation of *Māyā* (i.e., the physical universe) is knit into the texture of God's being.⁵ It is taken to constitute the psycho-physical organism of God.⁶ His *Cit-śakti*, on the other hand, clothes Him with spiritual form.⁷ It further provides Him with six divine majesties: sovereignty (*aīśvarya*), detachment (*vairāgya*), glory (*yaśas*), knowledge (*avabodha*), power (*vīrya*) and beauty (*śrī*).⁸ By the operation of *Māyā* and *Cit-śakti*, described collectively as *Ātma-māyā*⁹ or *Vibhūti-māyā*,¹⁰ God is clad in a couple of bodies—one material and the other spiritual—and, besides His cosmic operation, appears

³ *sa vai bhavān veda samasta-guhyam
upāsito yat puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ.
parāvareḥ manasaiva viśvaṁ
sṛjatyavatyatti guṇair asaṅgaḥ. 15.6*

⁴ *satya-saṁkalpa īśvaraḥ. 11.1.5 b*

⁵ *naitac citraṁ bhagavati hyanante jagadīśvare
ota-protam idam yasmiṁś tantuṣvaṅga yathā paśaḥ. 10.15.35*

⁶ *viśeṣaḥ tasya deho'yaṁ sthaviṣṭhaḥ ca sthaviyasām.
yatredaṁ vyajyate viśvaṁ bhūtaṁ bhavaṁ bhaṇac ca yat..
aṇḍa-kośe larīre'smin sapta-varaṇa-saṁyute.
vairājaḥ puruṣo yo'sau bhagavān dhāraṇāśrayaḥ. 2.1.24-25
vide also the verses 2.2.27-35 e.g., :—
uraḥ-sthalaṁ jyotir-anīkaṁ aśya
grīvā mahar vadaṇaṁ vai jano'sya
tapo rarāṣiṁ vidur ādi-puṁṣaḥ
satyaṁ tu śiṣṇāṁ sahasra-śiṣṇaḥ. 2.1.28*

⁷ *yasyāvayava-saṁsthānāṁ kalpito loka-vistaraḥ.
tad vai bhagavato rūpaṁ viśuddhaṁ sattvaṁ ūrjitaṁ. 1.3.3*

⁸ *tvāṁ sūribhis tattva-bubhutsayā'ddhā
sadābhivādārhaṇa-pāda-pīṭham.
aīśvarya-vairāgya-yaśo'avabodha-
vīrya-śrīyāṁ pūrtam ahaṁ prapadye. 3.24.32*

⁹ *nahyasya janmano hetuḥ karmaṇo vā mahi-pate.
ātma-māyāṁ vineśasya parasya draṣṭur ātmanaḥ. 9.24.57*

¹⁰ *nānā-tanūr gaganavad vidadhāj jahāsi
ko veda bhūmna urugāya vibhūti-māyāṁ 10.85.20 cd*

to the plane of our finite apprehension and reveals His supernatural qualities as a *Līlā'vatāra*.¹¹

Although plurality emanated out of His being and He allowed most intimate connection to develop between Him and His creation¹² and His divine will matured into creation, yet He never allowed the principle of creation (*Ajā*) to overrule His principle of spirituality (*Vidyā*). Throughout the continuous process of co-operation between the two powers,¹³ God remains permanently disinterested and is never deluded with the sense of plurality.¹⁴ Though immanent in the universe He is never doomed to worldly destiny. Permanently settled on the sense of unity, He is immune from the polluting sense of plurality.¹⁵ Thus He kept up His independent nature though indulging in creation of His own self.¹⁶ This brings out God's essentially transcendental nature which is not to be exhausted either through physical form or spiritual form or through both. In essence God is pure consciousness¹⁷ and limitless bliss.¹⁸ When the world-drama draws to its close and potencies of plurality are wound up and are lulled into inactivity, God retires to His

¹¹ *sattvaṁ na ced dhātar idaṁ nijaṁ bhavet
vijñānam ajñāna-bhida'pamājanam.
guṇa-prakāśair anumiyate bhavān
prakāśate yasya ca yena vā guṇaḥ.. 10.2.35
tais taiḥ svecchā-bhṛtai rūpaiḥ kāle kāle svayaṁ vibho.
karma durviśaḥ yaṁ na bhagavān tat karoti hi.. 8.5.46*

¹² *yāṁ yāṁ śaktim upāśritya puru-śaktiḥ paraḥ pumān.
ātmanāṁ kṛḍayan kṛḍan karoti vikaroti ca.. 2.4.7*

¹³ *sa viśva-kāyaḥ puru-hūta īśaḥ
satyaḥ svayaṁ-jyotiḥ ajaḥ purāṇaḥ.
dhatte'sya janmādyajayā'tma-śaktiā
tām vidyayodasya niriha āste.. 8.1.13*

¹⁴ *ya eka īśo jagad ātma-līlayā
śṛjatyavatyatti na tatra sajjate.. 1.10.24 cd*

¹⁵ *so'mṛtasyābhayaśyeśo marttyam annaṁ yad atyagāt.
mahimaiṣa tato brahman puruṣasya duratyayaḥ.. 2.6.18*

¹⁶ *ātmanā'tmāśrayaḥ pūrvam māyayā saśṛje guṇān.. 10.37.12 ab*

¹⁷ *vidito'si bhavān sāksāt puruṣaḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ.
kevalānubhāvānanda-svarūpaḥ sarva-buddhi-dṛk.. 10.3.13*

¹⁸ *ajāta-janma-sthiti-samyamāyā,
guṇāya nirvāṇa-sukhāṇavāyā.
aṇor aṇimne'parigaṇya-dhāmne
mahānubhāvāya namo namaḥ te.. 8.6.8*

being, *Brahman*,¹⁹ the first grade of Reality. Divested of all appearances God is then *Brahman*, pure and simple.²⁰ Here also the *Bhāgavata* reaffirms the transcendental nature of *Vedic* "*Puruṣa*".

The *Bhāgavata* has taken the "*vīrya*" of the *Vedic* Viṣṇu^{20a} to mean infinite powers inherent in God, achieved as a result of the process of differentiation of *Ātma-māyā* of *Brahman*.²¹ Endowed with such powers *Puruṣa*, the personal God, is called "limitless" (*ananta*).²² God's infinitude has baffled the attempts of the different Theorists to categorize Him to a fixed denomination. The *Vedāntists* call him *Brahman*, the *Mīmāṃsakas* like to call Him *Dharma*; the *Sāṃkhya* School calls Him *Puruṣa* distinct from *Prakṛti* and its evolutes while the *Pāñcarātras* conceive him to be endowed with nine powers viz, *Vimalā*, *Utkarṣiṇī*, *Jñānā*, *Kriyā*, *Yogā*, *Prahvī*, *Satyā*, *Īśānā* and *Anugrahā*. Schools like the *Pātāñjalas* call Him the Great *Puruṣa*.²³ His powers are responsible for convergence and divergence of views. People, for example, quarrel over the issue whether God has a form or not. But both of them forget that the postulation of a form or formlessness is done against the background of Reality which is then other than both form and formlessness. In fact, such disputes expose the limited nature of intelligence which

¹⁹ *yasmin viruddha-gatayo hyanīṣaṃ patanti vidyādayo vividha-śaktaya ānupūrvyā. tad brahma viśva-bhavam ekam anantam ādyam ānanda-mātram avikāram ahaṃ prapadye..* 4.9.16

²⁰ *etad rūpaṃ bhagavato hyarūpasya cidātmanah. māyā-guṇair viracitaṃ mahadādibhir ātmani. ataḥ paraṃ yad avyaktaṃ avyūḍha-guṇa-byrṇhitam. yatreme sadasad-rūpe pratiṣṭiddhe sva-samvidā. avidyayātmani kṛte iti tad brahma-darśanam..* 1.3.30, 32 ab, 33.

^{20a} *viṣṇor nu kaṃ vīryāṇi pra vocam.* RV 1.154.1

²¹ *nābhi-hradād iha sato'mbhasi yasya puṃso vijñāna-śaktir ahaṃ āsam ananta-śakteḥ..* 3.9.24 ab vide also 3.33.3

²² *yo vā anantasya guṇān anantān anukramiṣyan sa tu bāla-buddhiḥ. rajāṃsi bhūmer gaṇayet kathamcit kālēna naivākhila-śakti-dhāmnaḥ..* 11.4.2
vide also 8.17.27, 10.17.25, 10.63.25, 10.88.40, and 12.12.65

²³ *tvāṃ brahma kecid avayantyuta dharmam eka eke paraṃ sad-asatoḥ puruṣaṃ pareṣam. anye vayanāṃ nava-śakti-yutaṃ paraṃ tvāṃ kecin mahā-puruṣaṃ avayam ātma-tattvam..*
8.12.9; vide also Śrīdhara

can at best touch upon the fringe of Reality but cannot hope to exhaust it.²⁴ Such is indeed the majesty of God.²⁵

That God possesses innumerable merits is accountable by the presence of infinite potencies. He is called "*ananta*" (limitless) also because He is the shelter of all kinds of virtues that respond to both cosmic and spiritual demands.²⁶ God's innumerable manifestations and activities are traceable to these potencies.²⁷ God is limitless also because of infinite dimension. The cosmic egg (*aṇḍa-kośa*) containing the fourteen worlds is said to be of fifty crore *yojanas*; such egg is said to be encased by the eight principles (*tattvas*) viz, the five elements, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Mahat* and *Avyakta*, each of which is said to be ten times bigger than its immediate successor. But such a staggering mass rests in Him like an atom.²⁸ Crores of other universes move in Him like atoms²⁹ and yet they cause no strain in God.³⁰ Thus the *Bhāgavata* has tried to explain the epithet "*ananta*" applicable to God in different ways that make Him the God of religion with innumerable merits to the advantage of His worshippers,

²⁴ *yac-chaktayo vadatām vādinām vai
vivāda-saṁvāda-bhuvo bhavanti.
kurvanti caisām muhur ātma-mohaṁ
tasmai namo'nanta-guṇāya bhūmne..
astiti nastiti ca vastu-niṣṭhaya
ekasthaya bhinna-viruddha-dharmayoḥ.
avekṣitaṁ kiṁcana yoga-sāṁkhyayoḥ
samaṁ paraṁ hyanukūlaṁ bṛhat tat.. 6.4.31-32*

²⁵ *pāraṁ mahimna uru-vikramato gṛhāno
yaḥ pāṛthivāni vimame sa-rajāmsi marttyaḥ.
kiṁ jāyamāna uta jāta upaiti marttya
ityāha mantra-dṛg ṛṣiḥ puruṣasya yasya.. 8.23.29*

²⁶ *yo'nanta-śaktir bhagavān ananto
mahad-guṇatvād yam anantaṁ āhuḥ.. 1.18.19 cd
vide also 5.17.17, 6.9.36, 10.50.29 and 2.7.41*

²⁷ *janma-karmā'bhīdhānāni santi me'ṅga sahasraśaḥ.
na śakyante'nusāṁkhyātum anantatvān mayā'pi hi 10.51.36
vide also 3.13.45 and 6.4.33*

²⁸ *vikāraiḥ sahito yuktair viśeṣādibhir āvṛtaḥ.
aṇḍa-kośe bahir ayaṁ pañcāśat-koṭi-vistṛtaḥ..
daśottarādhikais tatra praviṣṭaḥ paramāṇuvat.
lakṣyate'ntar-gataś cānye koṭilo hyaṇḍa-rāśayaḥ.. 3.11.40-41*

²⁹ *kṣitīyādibhir eṣa kilāvṛtaḥ
saptabhir daśa-guṇottarair aṇḍa-kośaḥ.
yatra patatyānukalpaḥ
sahāṇḍa-koṭibhis tad anantaḥ 6.16.37 vide also 6.16.48*

³⁰ *kim asti-nāsti-vyapadeśa-bhūṣitaṁ
tadvā'sti kukṣeḥ kiyad apyanantaḥ.. 10.14.12 cd*

and also, God, the creator, in whom His creation comfortably abides. God can answer to both the spiritual and cosmic needs because He possesses infinite potencies.

God's infinite potencies can ultimately be reduced to two contradictory powers viz, *Cit-śakti*—the power of divinity—and *Māyā*—the power of materiality—to which reference has already been made. *Māyā* explains how God lends Himself to manifold expressions as the physical existence while *Cit-śakti* suggests that He is not exhausted in materiality because God as being is opposed to God as becoming. Through *Cit-śakti*, then, God maintains His existence distinct from matter and its evolutes although at the same time God is inextricably bound up with physical creation.³¹

The *Bhāgavata* position that the world serves as the body of God suggests that God is the soul of His creation. This means that like the individual soul pervading the individual body, God, the cosmic soul, has pervaded His entire creation. Like wind³² or ether³³ God fills His creation; like smell pervading earth³⁴ and like earth through its products,³⁵ He endures through the details of creation; and, like a man wandering through the land of his dream,³⁶ He has lent His existence to the creation of His own imagination. This last analogy affirms

³¹ *anantāvyaakta-rūpeṇa yenedam akhilaṁ tatam.
cid-acic-chakti-yuktāya tasmai bhagavate namaḥ.. 7.3.34
tvam ādyah puruṣaḥ sāksāt īśvaraḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ.
māyām vyudasya cic-chaktyā kaivalye sthita ātmani 1. 7. 23*

³² *yathā'nilah sthāvara-jaṅgamānām
ātma-svarūpeṇa niviṣṭa īśet.
evam paro bhagavān vāsudevaḥ
kṣetrajña ātmedam anupraviṣṭaḥ.. 5.11.14 vide also 1.17.34*

³³ *yan na spṛṣanti na vidur mano-buddhindriyāsavaḥ.
antar bahiḥ ca vitataṁ vyomavat tan nato'smyaham.. 6.16.23*

³⁴ *tvām ātmaniṣa bhuvi gandham ivā'ti-sūkṣmam
bhūtendriyāśayamaye vitataṁ dadarśa.. 7.9.35 cd*

³⁵ *ātma-sṛṣṭam idaṁ viśvam anvāvīṣya sva-śaktibhiḥ.
iyate bahudhā brahman fruta-pratyakṣa-gocaram..
yathā hi bhūteṣu carācareṣu
mahyādayo yoniṣu bhānti nānā.
evam bhavān kevalam ātma-yoni-
svātmā'tma-tantro bahudhā vibhāti.. 10.48.19-20*

³⁶ *nādyā no darśanaṁ prāptaḥ param parama-puruṣaḥ.
yarahidam śaktibhiḥ sṛṣṭvā praviṣṭo hyātma-sattayā..
yathā śayānaḥ puruṣo manasaivātma-māyayā.
sṛṣṭvā lokam param svāpnam anuviṣṭāvabhāṣate.. 10.86.44-45*

God's being against His creation which then is not as real as God Himself. And, if entrance implies the same degree of reality between the entrant and the entered into, then God must be taken to *appear* to enter His creation though in fact He does not.³⁷ The *Bhāgavata* draws upon the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* to explain how God has pervaded His creation. God penetrates through the material mass (*virāj*) brought about by the five gross elements (*sthūla-bhūtas*)³⁸ and was thus designated as "*Vairāja-Puruṣa*"³⁹ or simply as "*Puruṣa*".⁴⁰ The fourteen planes of existence contained in the material mass (*virāj*) constitute the different limbs of the Cosmic Man (*Vairāja-Puruṣa*).⁴¹ But in fact God's body extended beyond the gross creation contained in the material mass; it included all principles (*tattvas*) up to *Avyakta* (primordial matter), that constitute the subtle creation propounded by the *Sāṃkhya* School and adopted by the *Bhāgavata*.⁴² And, as the subtle creation forms the psychic organism of God, distinguished from elemental creation which

³⁷ *tayā vilasiteśveṣu guṇeṣu guṇavān iva.*

antaḥ-praviṣṭa ābhāti vijñānena vijrmbhitaḥ.. 1.2.31

vide also 7.12.15 and 10.3.14

³⁸ *śṛṣṭvā'gre mahadādīni savikārāṇyanukramāt.*

tebhyo virājam uddhṛtya tam anuprāviṣad vibhuḥ.. 3.7.21

³⁹ *aṇḍa-koṣe śarīre'smin sapta-varaṇa-saṁyute.*

vairājaḥ puruṣo yo'sau bhagavān dhāraṇātrayaḥ.. 2.1.25

⁴⁰ *bhūtair yadā pañcabhir ātma-śṛṣṭaiḥ*

puraṁ virājam viracayya tasmin.

svāmīna viṣṭaḥ puruṣābhidhānam

avāpa nārāyaṇa ādi-devaḥ.. 11.4.3.

⁴¹ *pātālam etasya hi pāda-mūlaṁ*

paṭhanti pārṣṇi-prapade rasātalam.

mahātalam viśva-śṛjō'tha gulphau

talātalam vai puruṣasya jaṅghe..

duḥ jānuni sūtalām viśva-mūrter

ūru-dvayam vītalam cātalam ca.

mahītalam taj-jaghanam mahipate

nabhastalam nābhi-saro gṛṇanti..

urāḥ-sthalam jyotir-anikam asya

grīvā mahar vadanam vai jano'sya

tapo rarāṣīm vidur ādi-puṁsaḥ

satyam tu śiṣṇāṇi sahasra-śiṣṇaḥ..

iyān asāvīṣvara-vigrahasya

yaḥ sanniveśaḥ kathito mayā te.. 2.1.26-28, 38 ab

⁴² *avyaktam āhur hṛdayam manaś ca*

sa candramāḥ sarva-vikāra-koṣaḥ.

vijñāna-śaktim mahim āmananti

sarvātmano'antaḥ-karaṇam girīram.. 2.1.34 cd, 35 ab

constitutes His physical organism, God expresses His feelings, graces and affections through His subtle creation.⁴³ Thus creation, gross and subtle, serves as a living organism permeated by God as the soul thereof.

Just as the physical creation which sometimes goes under the name, Nature, is suffused with the presence of God, so the four types of individual bodies are equally blessed with His presence. The *Bhāgavata* calls these bodies, each of which stands for a complex pattern of organic unity, "*pura*" (dwelling place) and God living in them is naturally called "*Puruṣa*."⁴⁴ Like fire distributed in multiple pieces of faggot, God has distributed Himself into the details of pragmatic existence of all degrees.⁴⁵ So, God has invaded both the macrocosm and the microcosm—the cosmic and the individual—and, though One He may appear to be many in response to our limited outlook. Getting into the body God settles in mind.⁴⁶ And, of all minds, man's mind declares the triumph of God's all-pervasive nature. His divine nature glows over man's doubts and perplexities.⁴⁷ As man with his superior type of mind cannot but be conscious of His divine presence, human form is God's dearest.⁴⁸ The vacuum (*dahara*) of the mind is filled by God's presence and nothing short of this will gratify those who are grounded in the great spiritual tradition (*āruṇayah*).⁴⁹ Though

⁴³ *daṁstrā yamaḥ sneha-kalā dvijāni*
hāso janonmādakari ca māyā
duranta-sargo yad-apāṅga-mokṣaḥ. 2.1.31 bed

⁴⁴ *ṣṣṣṣam sva-śaktyedam anupraviṣṭaḥ*
catur-vidhaṁ puram ātmāśṭakena.
athavidus taṁ puruṣaṁ santam antar
bhūikte hṛjikaḥ madhu sāragaṁ yaḥ.. 4.24.64

⁴⁵ *yathā hyavahito vahnir dāruṣvekaḥ sva-yoniṣu.*
nāneva bhāti viśvātmā bhūteṣu ca tathā pumān 1.2.32

vide also 4.9.7

⁴⁶ *upatiṣṭhasva puruṣaṁ bhagavantaṁ janārdanam.*
sarva-bhūta-guhāvāsaṁ vāsudevaṁ jagad-gurum.. 8.16.20

⁴⁷ *yaḥ kṣetra-vittapatayā hṛdī viśvag āviḥ*
pratyak cakāṣṭi bhagavāns taṁ avehi so'smi 4.22.37 cd

⁴⁸ *prāyeṇa manujā loke loka-tattva-vicakṣaṇāḥ.*
samuddharanti hyātmānam ātmanaivāśubhāśayāt..
eka-dvi-tri-catuṣ-pādo bahu-pādas tathā'padah.
bahvaḥ santi purāḥ ṣṣṣṣās tāsāṁ me pauraṣi priyā.. 11.7.19, 22

⁴⁹ *udaram upāsate ya ṛṣi-vartmasu kūrpa-dṛśaḥ.*
parisara-paddhatiṁ hṛdayam āruṇayo daharam. 10.87.18 ab

God is all-pervasive. He appears to be particularised in the individual centres of consciousness and that enables the individual mind to enjoy a sense of exclusive possession of the Divine. Here God behaves like the sun appearing many through the myriads of its reflections.⁵⁰

God does not merely saturate all creation with His existence but also witnesses every bit of His creation.⁵¹ Knowledge belongs to His being and this is so because God possesses *Cit-śakti*, the principle of divinity. He is the Divine light diffusing itself through mind and matter. But, because of its preponderance of *sattva*, mind can receive His reflection while matter overburdened with *tamas* cannot. God is therefore omniscient because He knows all bodies (*kṣetra*), whether individual or cosmic.⁵²

Omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence combine together in God as perfect equipment for cosmic control. They constitute His Lordship.⁵³ Such Lordship finds expression, among others, in divine grace (*kṛpā*), majesty (*bhūti*), power (*tejas*), sovereignty (*mahiman*) and irresistible force (*ojas*).⁵⁴ His Lordship had begun to operate before creation started. The *Bhāgavata* describes how from the centre (the naval region) of the unmanifest (*avyakta*), the limitless expanse of flexibility (*antaḥ-salila*), arose *Buddhi* or *Mahat*, the first principle radiant in its essence like a golden lotus, and how the rest of creation followed from *Mahat* with *Brahmā*, the presiding deity of *Mahat*, as the cosmic designer under the overall superin-

⁵⁰ *tam imam aham ajam śarīra-bhājām.
hṛdi hṛdi dhiṣṭhitaṁ ātma-kalpitanām.
prati-dīṣam iva naikadhārkam ekam
samadhigato'smi vidhūta-mohaḥ.. 19.42*

⁵¹ *bahir-antar-ātman
kiṁ vā'nya-vijñāpyam aśeṣa-sākṣiṇaḥ.. 8.6.14 cd*

⁵² *yo'ntar bahiḥ cetasa etad ihitam
kṣetrajña iṣṭatyamalena cakṣuṣā.. 10.38.18 cd*

⁵³ *śriyaḥ patir yajña-patiḥ prajā-patir
dhiyām patir loka-patir dharā-patiḥ.
patir gatiḥ cāndhaka-vṛṣṇi-sātvatām
prasīdatām me bhagavān satām patiḥ..
2.4.20 vide also 8.17.7 and 9.8.7*

⁵⁴ *yathā tvaṁ kṛpayā bhūtyā tejasā mahimaujasā.
juṣṭa īśa guṇaiḥ sarvais tato'si bhagavān prabhuḥ.. 6.19.5*

tendence of God.⁵⁵ The unmanifest was urged to creation when it was presided over by God who was then a baby whose physical growth was sought through the growth of creation.⁵⁶ The same God is recognizable as the ineffable reality when all that appear (*etat akhilam*) i.e., the three worlds of tangible apprehension merge into the womb of God at the end of a *kalpa*; and, again, when gross creation starts anew, Brahmā, sheltered at the material mass (*virāj*) called the golden lotus emerging from the centre of the Infinite (*nābhi-samudra*), moves the cosmic process to action.⁵⁷ When the evolutionary process starts operation the three *guṇa*-reals of *Prakṛti* lose their balance (*sāmya*), giving place to the preponderance of one *guṇa* over the others. Thus deities, progenitors (*prajāpatis*) and demons come into existence according as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* get upperhand over the other two respectively.⁵⁸ Thus emerge the world agents (*Ādhikārikas*) in grand hierarchy from Brahmā down to the *Loka-pālas* with respective assignments.⁵⁹ Left to their provincial autonomy they discharge their function individually and collectively under the central superin-

⁵⁵ *nābhi-hradād iha sato'mbhasi yasya puṁso
vijñāna-śaktir aham āsam ananta-śakteḥ.. 3.9.24 ab*

⁵⁶ *athāpyajo'ntaḥ-salile layānam
bhūten-driyārthāt-mamayaṁ vapuḥ te.
guṇa-pravāhaṁ sad-aśeṣa-bijaṁ
dadhyau svayaṁ yaj-jatharābja-jātaḥ..
sa eva viśvasya bhavān vidhatte
guṇa-pravāheṇa vibhakta-vīryaḥ
sargādyaniho'vitathābhivandhir
ātmeśvaro'tarkya-sahasra-śaktiḥ..
sa tvāṁ bhyto me jathareṇa nātha
katham nu yasyodara etad āsit
viśvaṁ yugānte vaṣa-patra ekaḥ
śete sma māyā-śiṣur aṅghri-pānaḥ.. 3.33.2-4*

⁵⁷ *kalpānta etad akhilam jathareṇa gṛhyaṁ
śete puṁān sva-dṛg ananta-sakhas tad-aṅke.
yan-nābhi-sindhu-ruha-kāncana-loka-padma-
garbhe dyumān bhagavate praṇato'smi tasmai.. 4.9.14*

⁵⁸ *na tvāṁ vayaṁ jaḍa-dhiyo nu vidāma bhūman
kūṣastham ādi-puruṣaṁ jagatām adhīsam.
yat-sattvataḥ sura-gaṇā rajasah prajefā
manyot ca bhūta-patayaḥ sa bhavān guṇeṣaḥ.. 9.10.14*

⁵⁹ *pare'vare'mi sthira-jaṅgamā ye
brahmādayo yena vaśaṁ praṇitāḥ.. 7.8.7 cd*

tendence of God.⁶⁰ The *Bhāgavata* concept of a cosmic machinery working in perfect harmony under the supervisory control of God suggests that creation is not allowed to drift aimlessly. Rather, creation is a controlled situation betrothed to the realisation of a profound purpose envisaged by the Doctrine of Divine Sport. The Ideal has become real to discover Its unending mystery of Divine ecstasy. Thus God's vigilance continues relentlessly until He cries a halt i.e., until cosmic deluge overtakes creation ; and, then, God recedes to His background, *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality, nay, to *Paramātmā*, the second grade of Reality ; and, having cast off the shell of immanence He reposes upon the splendour of infinitude.⁶¹ From the state of relative infinitude God thus courts absolute infinitude.

But until that final moment arrives God keeps on his vigilance over the cosmic process. God controls by His living presence which vitalizes all.⁶² God is in the full height of His glory when in exercise of His principle of divinity (*Cit-śakti*) He sustains, impels and guides the empirical ego.⁶³ The same principle ensures His mastery over materialism, the evolution of *Māyā*⁶⁴ and so, in spite of His fusion with the cosmic process His intrinsic nature does not suffer in the least.⁶⁵ Silently and incessantly He works through and floods the entire creation

⁶⁰ *yaṁ loka-pālāḥ kila matsara-jvarā
hitvā yatanto'pi pṛthak sametya ca.
pātum na śekur dvi-padaḥ catuṣ-padaḥ
sariṣṭpaṁ sthāṇu yad atra dṛśyate..* 5.18.27 vide also 6.9.25

⁶¹ *satyaṁ bhayād iva guṇebhya uru-kramāntah-
śete samudra upalambhana-mātra ātmā..* 10.60.35 ab

⁶² *tvam iṣṭe jagatas tasthuṣaś ca
prāṇena mukhyena patiḥ prajānām.
cittasya citter mana indriyāṇām
patir mahān bhūta-gaṇālayeśaḥ..* 7.3.29

⁶³ *paro-rajāḥ savitur jāta-vedo
devasya bhargo manasedaṁ jajāna.
sva-retasā'daḥ punar āviṣṭa caṣṭe
harisaṁ grdhānaṁ nṛ-śad-rinḡgirām imaḥ..* 5.7.14

⁶⁴ *tasyātma-tantrasya harer adhīṣṭuḥ
parasya māyādhipater mahātmanaḥ..* 6.3.17 ab

⁶⁵ *kva sve mahimnyabhirato bhagavāms tryadhīṣaḥ
kvā'haṁ guṇa-prakṛtir ajña-grhīta-pādā..* 10.60.34 cd

with His liberating knowledge and vitality.⁶⁶ Thus God extends His universal protection expressive of His pity. Even His chastisement is pity in disguise for He punishes to purge a fallen soul.⁶⁷ He had to pronounce death sentence on as great a villain as Hiranyakaśipu; but, God allowed the dying demon to be engrossed in His being. He courted death peacefully while his eyes were fixed on God.⁶⁸ So, God punishes so that purged of all sins a sinner can follow righteous path.⁶⁹ In this way God keeps moving the wheel of empirical life (*saṁsāra*).

In His sustenance of the universe God maintains absolute impartiality.⁷⁰ He has no friend or foe,⁷¹ no relative near or distant. This position enables Him to be impartial and disinterested.⁷² In fact, egotism (*abhimāna*) with its branches of attachment serves as the foundation of the system of partiality; and, such egotism is rooted in limited vision, the non-discrimination between matter (*Prakṛti*) and spirit (*Puruṣa*). God cannot but be free from partiality because God being identical with everything, does allow no scope for separatism that feeds egotism. With the aid of His *Cit-śakti* God not only realises His transcendental nature beyond the clutches of *Prakṛti* but He knows also His identification with *Prakṛti* and all that it evolves into. Such vision is then the basis of His disinterested-

⁶⁶ *etan nānā-vidhaṁ viśvaṁ ātma-śṛṣṭam adhokṣaja. atmanā'nupraviśyātman prāṇo jīvo bibharṣyaja..* 10.85.5
Śrīdhara comments:— *prāṇaḥ=kriyā-śaktiḥ; jīvaḥ = jñāna-śaktiḥ ca; san tvam eva bibharṣi.*

⁶⁷ *tathāpi daṇḍam bhagavān bibharti dharmasya guptyai khala-nigrahāya..* 10.27.5 cd

⁶⁸ *yaṁ yogino yoga-samādhinā raho dhyāyanti līṅgād asato mumukṣaya. tasyaiva daitya-ṛṣabhaḥ padāhato mukhaṁ prapaśyaṁs tanum utsarja ha..* 3.19.27

⁶⁹ *anugraho'yaṁ bhavataḥ kṛto hi no daṇḍo'satām te khalu kalmaṣāpahaḥ. yad dandaśūkatvam amuṣya dehinaḥ krodho'pi te'nugraha eva sammataḥ..* 10.16.34 vide also 10.27.7

⁷⁰ *alam te nir-apekṣāya pūrṇa-kāma namo'stu te.* 6.19.4 ab

⁷¹ *na yasya loke sva-janaḥ paro vā nātyādṛto nota kaścid vigarhyaḥ.* 3.14.26 ab

⁷² *na tasya kaścid dayitaḥ pratipo na jñāti-bandhur na paro na ca svaḥ. samasya sarvatra nirāñjanasya sukhe na rāgaḥ kutaḥ eva roṣaḥ..* 6.17.22

ness;⁷³ for, such vision of unity rules out disintegration of His nature into two, one of which might be favoured in exclusion of the other. Yet, in spite of His indifferent nature, He *does* favour some⁷⁴ while He punishes others.⁷⁵ How could this happen?

The answer is to be sought in the nature of God's control. God's grip over the cosmic process as well as over sustenance of the universe does not mean that the empirical ego is dispossessed of its personal responsibility for what it does in life. He has left His wisdom (*Vedas*) at the disposal of the empirical ego for its guidance.⁷⁶ Such wisdom is further presented to the ego as a formulation of moral laws for the guidance of its conduct.⁷⁷ But at the same time God has vested us with free will so that we are left with the option of choosing between adherence to His advice treasured in the *Vedas*, and utter surrender to the cravings of animal nature. This means that man is the architect of his own destiny, good or bad, and God controls man according to the laws of action (*Karman*) which man himself has performed.⁷⁸ Such laws which work behind the fruition of actions performed by us bind us down to a definite destiny.⁷⁹ Their range right up to *Brahmā* suggests their character of universal application.⁸⁰ Like bulls submitting to the wish of the

⁷³ *vaiṣamyam iha bhūtānām mamāham-iti pārthiva* 7.1.23 cd
tathā na yasya kaivalyād abhimāno'khlātmanaḥ. 7.1.24 ab

⁷⁴ *sarvātmanaḥ sama-dṛṣṭo viśamaḥ svabhāvo*
bhakta-priyo yad asi kalpa-taru-svabhāvaḥ. 8.23.8 cd
 vide also 10.38.22

⁷⁵ *tathā'pi daṇḍam bhagavān bibharṣi* 10.27.5 c

⁷⁶ *antar bahiḥ cā'khila-loka-pālakair*
adṛṣṭa-rūpo vicarasyuru-svanaḥ.
sa īśvaras tvaṁ ya idaṁ vasi'nayan
nāmnā yathā darumayīm naraḥ striyam.. 5.18.26

⁷⁷ *yo dur-vimarśa-pathayā nija-māyayedam*
śṛṣṭvā guṇān vibhajate tad-anupraviṣṭaḥ.
tasmai namo dur-avabodha-vihāra-tantra-
samsāra-cakra-gatāye paramēśvarāya.. 10.49.29

⁷⁸ *yad-vāci tantryām guṇa-karma-dāma-bhīḥ*
su-dus-tarair vatsa vyaṁ su-yojitāḥ. 5.1.14 ab

⁷⁹ *na tasya kalcit tapasā vidyayā vā*
na yoga-vīryeṇa maṇiṣayā vā.
naivā'riha-dharmaiḥ parataḥ svato vā
kṛtaṁ vihartum tanu-bhṛd vibhūyāt.. 5.1.12

⁸⁰ *nasyotavad yasya vasi ca lokāḥ.* 6.3.12 d

driver, when pulled by the strings fastened through nasal pores, from Brahmā down to the humblest of the living creatures submit themselves to the inevitable laws of action.⁸¹ Besides action, time (*Kāla*) is an additional aid to God's control. Due to time, the universe is in the state of perpetual flux. Everything is changing, and inevitably. Such change varies from a simple transition from one state to another to titanic upheaval.⁸² God controls and modifies the cosmic process as well as the behaviour of the living beings with the rod of time. All this means that appearance of favour and disfavour in God does not affect His impartial nature when He is engaged in cosmic control, because He does not arbitrarily favour and disfavour; but He directs the empirical ego to reap the fruit of its own action in course of time, without any apparent disruption in the harmonious evolution of the cosmic process.

But action and time as aids to the control of God appear to lead to a dilemma: If they are not admitted, God suffers from the charge of partiality; if, on the other hand, they are admitted, God loses His independence; for, God is then not absolutely free in His action but has to look upon action and time while He controls. The *Bhāgavata* meets the situation in this way: Action of variegated types which might lead either to bondage or to liberation is but an expression of God's power (*śakti-visarga*)⁸³; similarly, time is the creation of God.⁸⁴ So, both of them being the expressions of God's dynamic character, belong to His essence. Naturally both action and time being included in God, His dependence on action and time does not affect His independence. Rather, they exhibit His divine nature unfolding itself through the mysteries of diversity. Thus time being brought into existence disturbs the equilibrium of the three *guṇa*-reals and one of the three *guṇas* attains emphasis. Thus emphasised the *guṇa* inspires action which, in its turn, regulates the behaviour of the three *guṇa*-reals to evolve

⁸¹ vide 5.18.26 ref. 76

⁸² *kālah kalayatām iṣaḥ* 10.56.27 c

⁸³ *tathā'pi tac-chakti-visarga eṣāṁ
sukhāya dukkhāya hitā'hitāya.
bandhāya mokṣāya ca mṛtyu-janmanoh
śarīrīṇāṁ saṁsṛtaye'vakalpate..* 6.17.23

⁸⁴ *kālaṁ carantaṁ sṛjatiśa āśrayam* 7.1.11 a

in a particular direction. As the three *guṇas* are not emphasised simultaneously⁸⁵ the triumph of *sattva* means the flourish of Gods; similarly, emphasis of *rajas* is conducive to the rise of the demons while victory of *tamas* releases evil forces of lowest types.⁸⁶ God appears to favour all by turns, in compliance with the upsurge of one of the *guṇas*, determined by time and action.⁸⁷ Thus God's creation seems to move backward and forward although He sits at its helm all the time. Such variations add colour to His creative activity as well as to His insatiable desire for enjoyment.⁸⁸

Again, it is a part of His control that God, the divine light, burns within us all the time. There is something divine (*Vidyā*) in the "finite clod" of the empirical ego, which catches His flame (*Cit-śakti*) and it is part of God's nature to have this generous self-giving.⁸⁹ God thus acts as the spiritual guide. In fact, He is the primordial teacher (*parama guru*)⁹⁰ sending His spiritual message through all (*jagad-guru*).⁹¹ He combines within Himself the teacher, the soul, the friend and the Lord. He is the guide, the spiritual link of supreme consciousness between man and his highest good, and finally the *summum bonum* of spiritual aspirations.⁹² Thus God stands for the most complete response to all kinds of needs of the empirical ego, emotional as

⁸⁵ *sattvaṁ rajas tama iti prakṛter nātmano guṇāḥ.
na teṣāṁ yugapad rājan hrāsa ullāsa eva vā..* 7.1.7

⁸⁶ *jaya-kāle tu sattvasya devaṛjīn rajaso'surān.
tamaso yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi tat-kālānugūṇo'bhajat..* 7.1.8

⁸⁷ *ya eṣa rājann api kāla līlā
sattvaṁ surāṇikam ivaidhayatyataḥ.
tat-pratyānikān asurān sura-priyo
rajas-tamas-kān pramiṇotyuru-śravāḥ..* 7.1.11 cdef

⁸⁸ *yadā sisṛkṣuḥ pura ātmanaḥ paro
rajaḥ sṛjatyēṣa prīhak sva-māyayā.
sattvaṁ vicitrāsu riraṁsur īśvaraḥ
śayīṣyamāṇas tamā irayatyasau..* 7.1.10

⁸⁹ *jñānaṁ yad etad adadhāt katamaḥ sa devas
traikālikam sthira-careṣvanuvartitāmśam.
tam jīva-karma-padaṁ anuvartamāṇas
tāpa-trayopapaśamanāya vyaṁ bhajemaḥ..* 3.31.16

⁹⁰ *bhagavataḥ parama-guroḥ* 6.9.43

⁹¹ *āśvāsya bhagavān itthaṁ citra-ketuṁ jagad-guruḥ.
paśyatas tasya viśvātmā tataś cāntar-dadhe hariḥ..* 6.16.65

⁹² *tvaṁ sarva-lokasya suhṛt-priyēṣvaro
hyātmā gurur jñānam abhiṣṭa-siddhiḥ.* 8.24.52 ab
vide also 10.27.13

well as intellectual, and, above all, spiritual. As the spiritual teacher *par excellence* God leads us unmistakably to the path of emancipation.⁹³ A human teacher may mislead but the ineffable light of God shines upon man to disclose his ultimate being (*nija-pada*).⁹⁴ A human teacher may himself be blind to higher truth. How can he then bring others to the portals of knowledge? But God is the unfailing guide, the beacon light that surely points to the goal. So one should depend more on God than on human beings.⁹⁵ Unflinching adherence to God, the spiritual teacher, shakes off the evils of intellect and breaks through the stronghold of prejudices.⁹⁶ It effaces the taints of mind and the empirical ego regains, as a consequence, its lost paradise just as silver, passed through fire, gets back its original hue.⁹⁷

Longing for God is a natural urge in man as generous self-giving is an instinct in God. Man seeks God because God is the fulfilment of man, the cosmic soul, in which man's broken and fragmentary life is harmonised and completed. God is then the dearest.⁹⁸ Things are dear to us, that give satisfaction to our soul. God standing for the highest good is the cosmic soul and is then the dearest.⁹⁹ God, the cosmic soul, is the soul of all souls just as water is the source of life of all fish that live in it.¹⁰⁰ The entire universe is irrevocably moving towards

⁹³ *vimukti-do naḥ paramo gurur bhavān* 8.24.46 d

⁹⁴ *jano janasyādīlata'satim gatim
yayā prapadyeta duratyayaṁ tamaḥ.
tvam tvavyayaṁ jñānam amogham añjaśā
prapadyate yena jano nijam padam..* 8.24.51

⁹⁵ *tvam arka-dṛk sarva-dṛśam samikṣaṇo
urto gurur naḥ sva-gatim bubhutsatām* 8.24.50 cd

⁹⁶ *yat-sevayā tām vidhunotyasan-matim
granthim sa bhindyad hṛdayaṁ sa no guruḥ.* 8.24.47 cd

⁹⁷ *yat-sevayā'gner iva rudra-rodanaṁ
pumān vijahyān malam ātmanas tamaḥ.
bhajeta varṇaṁ nijam eṣa so'vyayo
bhūyāt sa iśaḥ paramo gurur guruḥ..* 8.24.48

⁹⁸ *sa vai priyatamaś cātmā* 4.29.51 a

⁹⁹ *śreyasām api sarveṣām ātmā hyavadhir arthataḥ.
sarveṣām api bhūtānām harir ātmā'tma-daḥ priyaḥ..* 4.31.13

¹⁰⁰ *harir hi sāksād bhagavān śarīriṇām
ātmā jhaṣāṇām iva toyam ipsitam* 5.18.13 ab

what pleases the soul.¹⁰¹ So in spite of God's absolute impartiality, God is the dearest of all,¹⁰² the beloved life-principle that sustains the being of all.¹⁰³

The instinct of love for God finds expression in man's behaviour which we call the worship of God. But here we are confronted by several questions. Does man's worship satisfy God? If it does, then God is not self-sufficient because man's worship removes an inadequacy, a want, so long inherent in Him. If it does not, why should man undergo all the pains for it? If man's worship satisfies God, that satisfaction should express itself in the form of His favour. Similarly, man's hostility to God should incur his displeasure which should similarly be felt as His disfavour. How can God maintain His impartial character in face of such favour or disfavour? If, on the other hand, grace of God is a spontaneous act, it should shine on all, irrespective of worship or hostility. Questions like these have raged in man's mind. The *Bhāgavata* has proposed answers to them : (i) God is comparable to the celestial tree (*kalpa-vṛkṣa*) which, despite its neutrality, fulfils the desire of a person asking for such fulfilment. So God is neutral ; yet He responds to the prayer of man.¹⁰⁴ (ii) But this answer is naive. Apart from the question of reality of such a benign tree, analogy can never adequately serve as a logic that sets all questions at rest. So the *Bhāgavata* proposes a second answer intended to forge a compromise between God's impartiality and utility of worship : Worship of God does Him no good. Yet such a process enhances inner purity of the worshipper. If one wishes to ornament the shadow-face of oneself one should ornament the real face of oneself. Similarly, if the worshipper wishes to increase his inner excellence he should

¹⁰¹ *sarveṣāṃ api bhūtānāṃ nṛpa svātmaiva vallabhaḥ.
itare'patya-vittādyās tad-vallabhatayaiva hi..
tasmāt priyatamaḥ svātmā sarveṣāṃ api dehinām.
tad-artham eva sakalaṃ jagad etac carācaram..* 10.14.50, 54

¹⁰² *na hyasyāsti priyaḥ kaścin nā'priyaḥ svaḥ paro'pi vā.
ātmavāt sarva-bhūtānāṃ sarva-bhūta-priyo hariḥ..* 6.17.33

¹⁰³ *sarveṣāṃ api bhūtānāṃ harir ātmeśvaraḥ priyaḥ.
bhūtair mahadbhiḥ sva-kṛtair kṛtānāṃ jīva-samjñitah..* 7.7.49

¹⁰⁴ *bhakta-priyo yad asi kalpa-taru-svabhāvaḥ.* 8.23.8 d
vide also 10.38.22

worship God whose shadow he is.¹⁰⁵ In other words, worship or hostility assumes the shape of destiny of man; and, it regulates the cosmic process. As destiny (*Karman*) is the manifestation of God's power of materiality (*Māyā*), God is said to undergo pity or chastisement though in fact the blessing or wrath of heaven refers to man's own action while God continues to maintain His native indifference.¹⁰⁶

In this sense God is inclined to the good although He is impartial to all.¹⁰⁷ As God possesses man so man possesses God. The worshipper surrenders himself only to acquire God as a bargain.¹⁰⁸ God assumes diverse forms in response to the personal taste and propensity of the worshipper.¹⁰⁹ Ever ready with His divine grace, He is especially disposed to the down-trodden;¹¹⁰ even the hostile demons are no exceptions to it.¹¹¹ Sincere and concentrated worship of God dispels impurity from the mind which then radiates with His divine form.¹¹² The only shelter of the drowning soul,¹¹³ God disentangles the snare

¹⁰⁵ *naivā'tmanaḥ prabhur ayaṁ nija-lābha-pūrṇo mānaṁ janād aviduṣaḥ karuṇo vṛṇīte. yad yaj jano bhagavate vidadhīta mānaṁ tac cātmane prati-mukhasya yathā mukha-śriḥ.. 7.9.11*

¹⁰⁶ *sama-viśama-matinām mataṁ anusarasi yathā rajju-khaṇḍaḥ sarpaḍi-dhiyām. 6.9.37*

¹⁰⁷ *tasyaiva te'mūs tanavas tri-lokyām lāntā a-lāntā uta mūdha-yonayaḥ. lāntāḥ priyās te hyadhunā'vitum satām sthātus ca te dharma-paripsayehataḥ.. 10.16.50*
vide also 1.9.21-23 and 8.16.14

¹⁰⁸ *a-jita jitaḥ sama-matibhiḥ sādhubhir bhavān jita'tmabhir bhavatā. vijitās te'pi ca bhajatām a-kāmā'tmanām ya ātma-do'ti-karuṇaḥ.. 6.16.34*

¹⁰⁹ *tvaṁ bhakti-yoga-paribhāvita-hṛt-saroja āsse hrutekṛita-paṭho nanu nātha pumsām. yad yad dhiyā ta uru-gāya vibhāvayanti tat tad vapuḥ praṇayase sad-anugrahāya.. 3.9.11*

¹¹⁰ *tvaṁ vai prajānām sthira-jaṅgamānām parāyaṇaṁ naur iva majjato'psu.. 8.17.28 ad*

¹¹¹ *yaśmiṁ vairānubandhena rūḍhena vibudhetarāḥ. bahavo lebhire siddhiṁ yām u haikānta-yogināḥ.. 8.22.6*

¹¹² *parameṣā'tma-yoga-samādhinā paribhāvita-parisphuṭa-pāramahansa-dharmenodghāṭita-tamaḥ-kavāṭa-dvāre citte'pāvṛta ātma-loke svayam-upalabdha-nija-sukhānubhavo bhavān. 6.9.33*

¹¹³ *bhūtaṁ prapannāṁ paripāti yad bhayān mṛtyuḥ pradhāvatyarāṇaṁ tam imahi. 8.2.33 cd*

of pragmatic existence and leads man to his cherished goal, the land of eternal bliss.¹¹⁴ Worship of God not only ensures personal emancipation but it entails satisfaction of the entire world. The reason is that the satisfaction of the world-soul means the satisfaction of all just as watering at the root refreshes the whole tree. Worship of God therefore satisfies other deities for they have all branched off from God's being.¹¹⁵

Through all the stages of the cosmic drama the Divine enjoys. He is not merely the cosmic witness thereof but participates as an actor.¹¹⁶ As the cosmic soul God enjoys all simultaneously. Distributing Himself as the cosmic agents (Brahmā etc.) He enjoys in succession.¹¹⁷ He had started creation to satisfy His instinct of pleasure and when the evolutionary process was solidified into the fourteen worlds He entered them to enjoy pleasure out of His own creation.¹¹⁸ Yet His enjoyment must be distinguished from the happiness of the empirical ego. While happiness of the latter emerges from the dark chasms of perplexing attachments, God enjoys the crystal of His own unending dynamism in which no limitation is allowed to cast its shadow.¹¹⁹ But if Divine Sport consumes all particulars the empirical egos cannot stand out from this totality.

¹¹⁴ *sakṛd yad-aṅga-pratimāntarāhitā
manomayī bhāgavatīm dadau gatim..* 10.12.39 ab

¹¹⁵ *yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhūtopa-sākhāḥ.
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām
tathaiwa sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā..* 4.31.14

¹¹⁶ *asau guṇa-mayair bhāvair bhūta-sūksmendriyātmabhiḥ.
sva-nirmiteṣu nirdiṣṭo bhunkte bhūteṣu tad-guṇān..* 1.2.33

¹¹⁷ *yathā guṇāṁs tu prakṛter yugapat kramas'o'pi vā.
bibharti bhūriṣa tvekaḥ kurvan karmāṇi janmabhiḥ..* 2.4.9

¹¹⁸ *bhūtair mahadbhir ya imāḥ puro vibhur
nirmāya śete yad amūṣu pūruṣaḥ.
bhunkte guṇān śoḍaśa śoḍaśātmakāḥ.
so'laṅkṣyā'khīla-vit vacāṁsi me..* 2.4.23

¹¹⁹ *tat tasthusaś ca jagataś ca bhavān adhiṣo
yan māyayottha-guṇa-vikriyayopanītān.
arthān juṣann api hṛṣika-pate na lipto
ye'nye svataḥ parihṛtād api bibhyati sma..* 11.6.17

God, then, suffers as the empirical ego and even so He furthers the cause of His instinct of play!¹²⁰

CIT-ŚAKTI

Creation has no *first* beginning. So, the only rational and practical way to describe the beginning of a specific creation is to state how a particular creation came to its end so that it could serve as a fresh springboard for another creation. The *Bhāgavata* describes the process of dissolution as follows:—When involution began the gross elemental creation dissolved into the five subtle elements and the five subtle elements merged into the unmanifest consisting of the three *guṇa*-reals. Time, which at the beginning of creation had disturbed the equilibrium of the three *guṇa*-reals, restores the same in them.¹²¹ Then, the *guṇa*-reals together with their auxiliaries, time etc., are lulled into *Māyā*. But *Māyā* as well recedes to its background, *Ātma-māyā*. With the cessation of *Māyā*, the empirical egos merge into their being, *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality, and ultimately to *Paramātmān*, the second grade of Reality,¹²² when *Brahman*, divested of its minimum anxiety of creation (i.e., with *Ātma-māyā*'s dissolution into *Viṣṇu-māyā*), becomes *Paramātmān*. *Paramātmān*, the cosmic soul, is then left to its native splendour. For, when the principle of diversity (*Ātma-māyā*) is fast asleep in the womb of *Viṣṇu-māyā*, the latter is left, with its creative aspect sterilised for the time being, to represent *Paramātmān*'s native splendour only. Marked by such a state of *Viṣṇu-māyā*, *Paramātmān* is then said to be asleep though, in fact, He can never be asleep for that would be the denial of His native splendour (*supta-śaktiḥ* but *a-supta-*

¹²⁰ *evam sṛṣṭāni bhūtāni pravṛjṣaḥ pañca-dhātubhiḥ.
ekadhā daśadhā'tmānam vibhajan juṣate guṇān..
guṇair guṇān sa bhuñjāna ātma-pradyotitaiḥ prabhuḥ.
manyamāna idam sṛṣṭam ātmānam iha sajjate..
karmāṇi karmabhiḥ kurvan sa-nimittāni deha-bhṛt.
tat tat karma-phalaṁ grhṇan bhramatiha sukhatarān.. 11.3.4-6*

¹²¹ *kālenā'tmā'nubhāvena sāmyam nūtasu śaktiṣu.
sattvā'diṣvādī-puruṣaḥ pradhāna-puruṣeṣvaraḥ.. 11.9.17*

¹²² *sa vai kilā'yaṁ puruṣaḥ purātano
ya eka āsīd aviśeṣa ātmani.
agre guṇebhyo jagad-ātmaniṣvare
nimittā'tman. niṣi supta-śaktiṣu.. 1.10.21 vide also 3.5.6*

dyk).¹²³ If, on the basis of the analogy of the states of the empirical ego, we consider the gross elemental creation to provide for the awakening (*jāgrat*) of God, the subtle creation from *Mahat* to the *Tanmātras* (five subtle elements) to stand for His dream, and, beyond these two types of creation, the stage of the unmanifest (*Avyakta*) leading up to *Ātma-māyā* to be God's dreamless sleep when God retires to *Paramātman*, then, *Paramātman*, as the Ultimate Reality beyond these three states (*jāgrat*, *svapna* and *susupti*) may legitimately be called the fourth state (*turiya*), the transcendental.¹²⁴ It may be noted here that dissolution of the gross as well as the subtle is the cosmic ocean, the undifferentiated material mass (*Avyakta*) called "*tamas*" (darkness).¹²⁵ Plurality having ceased, God is then left to His residual nature¹²⁶ transcending *Avyakta*. This is then the rest of God on *Śeṣa* (His own residual nature) above the ocean.

God, merging into the essence of *Paramātman*, as stated above, is then left to His divine isolation (*kaivalya-samjñitah*) because all that shines at that time is His native splendour. Deprived of any conditions (*upādhi*) which it might consume as its objects (*viṣaya*), such splendour then falls back and feeds upon the totality of bliss (*ānanda-sandoha*).¹²⁷ This innate splendour is the core of *Cit-śakti* which finds expression in God as the principle of divination. While a kind of fruit (*karkaṭikā-phala*) bursts into destruction, lightning fades away with a spark and the rest of the creation are destroyed or at least submit to change—in short, while the material world appears and dis-

¹²³ *supta-śaktir a-supta-dyḥ* 3.5.24d

¹²⁴ *nyasyedam ātmani jagad vilayā'mbu-madhye*
śeṣe tmanā nija-sukhā'nubhavo nir-īhaḥ.
yogena mīlita-dyḥ ātmani pīta-nidras
turye sthito na tu tamo na guṇāś ca yunkṣe.. 7.9.32

¹²⁵ *tamas tad āsīd gahanam gabhiram*
yas tasya pāre'bhivirājate vibhuḥ.. 8.3.5cd

¹²⁶ *rūpaṁ yat tat prāhur avyaktam ādyaṁ*
brahma jyotiḥ nir-guṇam nir-vikāram.
sattā-mātram nir-viśeṣam nir-īham
sa tvaṁ sākṣād viṣṇur adhyātma-dīpaḥ.. 10.3.24

¹²⁷ *parā'varāṇām parama āste kaivalya-samjñitah.*
kevalā'nubhavā'nanda-sandoho nir-upādhikah.. 11.9.18

appears—the eternal light glows unabated and witnesses all that happens.¹²⁸

Divine splendour or *Cit-śakti* distinguishes God from man. While man drifts along the dispositions of the mind with which he falsely identifies himself, God endures through the same mind and is yet the disinterested witness thereof. *Cit-śakti* helps God to steer clear of all plurality because it is the integral vision (*akhaṇḍa-sva-dṛṣṭi*) which dissolves all fragmentations into indissoluble unity.¹²⁹ The ripples of plurality (*śaktyūrmi*) give place to the immutable oneness of blissful consciousness (*ātmā'nandā'nubhūti*) which by its very nature discards plurality.¹³⁰ Oneness and transcendentalism which characterise *Cit-śakti* thus enable God to remain free from the coils of empirical life. While the empirical ego suffers under the pressure of action (*Karman*) brought about by its own limited vision that creates a life of allurements and attachment, God enjoys perfect freedom because His unitary vision never allows His nature to be polluted by phenomenality.¹³¹ This divine splendour is the vision of unity which has nothing but eternal bliss, within its purview.

But within the framework of basic unity, divine splendour (*sva-rociḥ*) works as the first impetus to creation.¹³² With its help God manifests what is dormant in Him. It is first expressed as divine speculation (*ikṣaṇa*) out of which in due course emerge Time, Action and Nature (*Kāla*, *Karman* and *Svabhāva*) which act upon the three *guṇa*-reals to evolve into creation. The same power rouses the world-agents (*Prajā-patis*) to resume their cosmic duties. Thus *Cit-śakti* helps God to make the factors of creation operative, whether they are

¹²⁸ *yaḥ svā'tmanidaṁ nija-māyayā'rpitaṁ
kvacid vibhātaṁ kva ca tat tirohitaṁ.
a-biddha-dṛk sākṣyubhayaṁ tad ikṣate
sa ātma-mūlo'vatu mām parāt paraḥ..* 8.3.4

¹²⁹ *tvam nitya-mukta-pariśuddha-vibuddha ātmā
kūṣastha ādi-puruṣo bhagavāms tryadhīśaḥ.
yad buddhyavasthitim a-khaṇḍitayā-sva-dṛṣṭyā
draṣṭā sthita-vadhi-makho vyatirikta āse..* 4.9.15

¹³⁰ *ātmā'nandā'nubhūtyaiva nyasta-śaktyūrmaye namaḥ.* 6.16.20ab

¹³¹ *taṁ tvā'nubhūtyoparata-kriyā'rthaṁ
sva-māyayā'vartita-loka-tantram.* 3.21.21ab vide also 10.84.33

¹³² *tasmai namo bhagavate ya idam svena rociṣā.
ātma-sthaṁ vyañjayāmāsa sa dharmam pātum arhati..* 3.12.32

efficient causes like Time etc. or intelligent agents, or the material causes like the three *guṇa*-reals.¹³³ *Cit-śakti* in this way ensures self-sufficiency of God, the creator, in that it co-operates with *Māyā*, although as the unitary vision, *Cit-śakti* is opposed to *Māyā* which brings about the experience of plurality. This means that *Cit-śakti* does not oppose creation *per se* i.e., the manifestation of God, but it does oppose the disintegrating outlook of the ego which the latter develops towards creation; and, as such outlook is the outcome of *Avidyā*, an aspect of *Māyā*, so *Cit-śakti* is opposed to *Māyā*.

Cit-śakti is with God not only beyond, before and behind creation but it also enables God to control each stage of the evolutionary process. Again, when the world is brought into existence God continues to be within it as the cosmic witness with the aid of *Cit-śakti*.¹³⁴ Unimpeded, it travels through all the details of creation and thus stands for God's omniscience. With its help God knows all our desires (*cikīrṣitam*)¹³⁵ and such knowledge is always direct. God knows all because He sees all.¹³⁶ All types of knowledge which the ego may acquire are blessed with the touch of divine knowledge. God's splendour radiates upon the sense organs and the mind, as it diffuses itself in the world of external objects.¹³⁷ It is His splendour, again, which dispels the impenetrable gloom from the mental horizon of the empirical ego (*tamo haṁsi sva-rociṣā*).¹³⁸ Thus evading the ordinary experience of the empirical ego, *Cit-śakti* casts its radiance upon the infinitesimal details of creation, like the rays of the sun, that penetrate the clouds and shine upon the plains down below. Like the sun lighting up both the clouds and the plains below, the Self-luminous, although screen-

¹³³ *vihara ud-ikṣayā* 10.87.29b

¹³⁴ *haṁsāya dahra-nīlayāya nir-ikṣakāya
kṣṇāya mṛṣā-yaśase nir-upakramāya.
sat-saṁgrahāya bhava-pāntha-nijā'sramā'ptā-
vante pariṣṭa-gataye haraye namas te..* 6.9.45

¹³⁵ *bhagavān sarva-bhūtānām adhyakṣo'vasthito guhām.
veda hyapratiruddhena prajñānena cikīrṣitam..* 2.9.24

¹³⁶ *sarvaṁ tvaṁ vetsyi sarva-dṛk* 10.14.39b

¹³⁷ *yaṁ vai śvasantam anu viśva-sṛjaḥ śvasanti
yaṁ cekitānam anu-cittaya uccakanti.* 6.16.48ab

¹³⁸ *a-prattaṁ naś tvayā kiṁ nu bhagavan bhuvaneśvara.
yaṁ no'ntar-hṛdayaṁ viśya tamo haṁsi sva-rociṣā..* 9.11.6

ed by the three *guṇa*-reals, illumines both the *guṇas* as well as the ego labouring under them.¹³⁹

The divine splendour does not merely illuminate but vitalizes all as well. The "clods" of pragmatic existence (*Jīvas*) breathe because God's splendour breathes through all.¹⁴⁰ *Cit-śakti* is the life-giving force of the universe. Senses, mind and body (*ojas*, *sahas* and *bala*)—in a word, the microcosm—acquire necessary vitality, both for their very existence as well as peaceful operation, from *Cit-śakti*¹⁴¹ which moulds their very character.¹⁴²

And lastly, the ever-lasting power of *Cit-śakti* which remains wide awake while all other powers fall to sleep,¹⁴³ and which maintains the integrity of God through all the stages of the cosmic process,¹⁴⁴ continues to exist in its pristine glory when the world drama unfolded by the three *guṇa*-reals (*Ajā*) comes to its close and the undifferentiated Reality (*Paramātmā*) is left to shine, from which the world of plurality has disappeared for all times to come.¹⁴⁵

MĀYĀ

&

VIDYĀ, AVIDYĀ AND PRAKṚTI

The Absolute of metaphysics and the personal God of religion are fused in a point of view which we call the philosophy of religion. The recognition of *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā*, the principle of divinity and the principle of materiality, is an outcome as well as an explanation of this uniting process. There is said

¹³⁹ *yathaiṣa sūryaḥ pihitaś chāyayā svayā |*
chāyān ca rūpāṇi ca sañcakāṣṭi.
evam guṇeṇā'pihito guṇāḥ tvam
ātma-pradīpo guṇiṇaś ca bhūman.. 10.63.39

¹⁴⁰ vide 6.16.48 above ref. 137

¹⁴¹ *jāne tvāṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ prāṇa ojaś saho balam.*
viṣṇuṁ purāṇa-puruṣaṁ prabhaviṣṇuṁ adhīṣṭvaram.. 10.56.26

¹⁴² *prāṇā'dināṁ viśva-sṛjāṁ śaktayo yāḥ parasya tāḥ.* 10.85.6ab

¹⁴³ *supta-śaktir a-supta-dṛk* 3.5.24d

¹⁴⁴ *māyāṁ vyudasya cic-chaktyā kaivalye sthita ātmani.* 1.7.23cd

¹⁴⁵ *sa viśva-kāyaḥ puru-hūta iṣaḥ*
satyaḥ svayām-īyotir ajaḥ purāṇaḥ.
dhatte'sya janmā'dyajāyātma-śaktyā
taṁ vidyayodasya nīr-iha āste.. 8.1.13

to be conflict between the two and, as a result, *Cit-śakti* overtakes *Māyā* and so God becomes the Absolute, divested of His material vesture. Conversely, when *Māyā* predominates over *Cit-śakti* empirical life of the individual soul triumphs over spiritual insight. But, in spite of conflict the two principles may co-operate and creation is brought into existence as a consequence. In creation *Cit-śakti* may again show its conflicting tendency and the individual soul regains thereby its lost paradise. Thus constant conflict and co-operation between the two principles serve to maintain the unity of the Absolute perpetually renewing itself through earthly forms.

From the standpoint of metaphysics with its insistence on the unity of the Absolute, *Māyā* stands for phenomenalism. It is an explanation for the world of plurality (*māyayā uru-dhā*).¹⁴⁶ And in conformity with the unity of the Absolute it has to owe its existence to the Absolute—a power (*śakti*), a divine dynamism unfolding itself into the cosmic drama of plurality. So, to the *Bhāgavata*, *Māyā* is an expression (*vai-bhava*) of *Yoga-māyā*,¹⁴⁷ a solidification of *Viṣṇu-māyā*¹⁴⁸ and the direct transformation of *Ātma-māyā*, the Divine Will, the anticipation which directly materialises into the principle of phenomenalism. From the standpoint of metaphysics (*jñāna*) therefore the *Bhāgavata* defines *Māyā* as follows:—"That which merely appears (without a reality of its own) against the background of the soul and at times eludes detection though it is there in the soul is *Māyā*. In its first aspect, it may be compared with the second moon which distorted vision may sometimes present. In its second aspect it is comparable to "*rāhu*" (the mythical monster—the dark shadow appearing to swallow the moon at the time of the lunar eclipse) which though existent is not visible excepting at some specific points of time."¹⁴⁹ In other words, *Māyā* is the antithesis to the nature

¹⁴⁶ *tad idam bhagavān rājann eka ātmā'tmanām sva-dṛk.
antaro'nantaro bhāti paśya tam māyayorudhā..* 1.13.48

vide also 3.9.1

¹⁴⁷ *sa evam anubhūyedaṁ nārāyaṇa-vinirmitam.
vaibhavaṁ yoga-māyāyāś tam eva śaraṇaṁ yayau..
yaṇ-māyayā'pi vibudhā muhyanti jñāna-kāṣayā..* 12.10.1, 2cd

¹⁴⁸ *iyaṁ hi prakṛtiḥ sūkṣmā māyā-śaktir dur-atyayā.* 6.19.11cd

¹⁴⁹ *re'ṭham yat pratīyeta na pratīyeta cā'tmani.
tad vidyād ātmano māyām yathā'bhāso yathā tamaḥ..* 2.9.33

of the Absolute; while the Absolute shines and always reveals Its own essence, *Māyā* has no essence of its own and its elusive character is sometimes detected, some other times not. *Māyā* is thus reduced to a mere shadow (*ābhāsa* or *tamas*) of the Absolute; yet, its practical bearing is undeniable and its *modus operandi* is simply an enigma for logic.¹⁵⁰

This shows that the standpoint of metaphysics and the practical standpoint need not converge. The individual soul is, in fact, confronted by an inexorable world where it is drifting along the stream of empirical life under the compulsion of forces over which it has no control. Caught up by afflictions it wistfully longs for liberation. No metaphysics can, all on a sudden, dissolve the problems which are intensely practical. These problems have to be properly formulated, their root-cause detected and some gospel of liberation has to be promulgated anew. The *Bhāgavata* comes forward to meet this situation. In its allegiance to religion permeated by the presence of the personal God, it resorts to Pantheism and accordingly takes *Māyā* to evolve into *Prakṛti* which brings the universe into existence. But such universe is not an illusion for all practical purposes; it is the emanation of God. The cause of suffering of the individual soul has therefore to be sought elsewhere—in *Avidyā*, the force of bondage, which, by the mysterious operation of *Māyā*, is born a twin with *Vidyā*, the force of liberation. As bondage and liberation refer to the material existence of the individual soul, both *Avidyā* and *Vidyā*, the principle of bondage and the principle of liberation, are to be traced to *Māyā*, the principle of materiality.¹⁵¹ So, from *Māyā* emerge *Prakṛti*, the principle of creation, on the one hand, and *Avidyā* and *Vidyā*, the principles of bondage and liberation, on the other. *Māyā* thus represents an object-subject complex which shows that the *Bhāgavata* reaffirms its faith in the compromise between the practical and the metaphysical.

The nature of *Prakṛti* largely conforms to that of the *Sāṃkhya*. *Prakṛti*, at its core, is undifferentiated (*a-viśeṣa*)

¹⁵⁰ *athavā deva-māyāyā nūnam gatir a-gocarā. cetaso vacasaś cāpi bhūtānām iti niścayaḥ.. 1.17.23 vide also 5.2.7*

¹⁵¹ *vidyāvidye mama tanū viddhyuddhava śarīrāṇām. mokṣa-bandha-karī ādye māyā me vinirmīte.. 11.11.3*

though it is the primordial source of all differentiations (*viśeṣa-vat*). It is distinguished from non-dual *Brahman* in that it consists in the three *guṇa*-reals (*tri-guṇa*). Being a non-product (*avyakta*) it is other than its evolutes, *Mahat* etc., which are all products. Constituting the chain of cause and effect (*kārya-kāraṇā'tmaka*) it is distinct from Time which, being merely the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*), does not incorporate its effects within it. Lastly, being the energy of God it is eternal (*nitya*) though it is constantly given to flux (*parināmin*).¹⁵² But the *Bhāgavata* would prefer to call *Prakṛti* by the name "*guṇamayī Ātma-māyā*".¹⁵³ Being an expression of *Māyā*, it can be nothing other than *Māyā*. As *Māyā* is in essence God Himself,¹⁵⁴ so *Prakṛti* cannot but be *Ātma-māyā*. And finally, as it consists in three *guṇa*-reals it is naturally called "*guṇamayī*". So, the designation points to the pedigree as it describes the nature of *Prakṛti*. The description of *Prakṛti* in terms of *Māyā* also suggests the conformity to a set pattern adopted by the *Bhāgavata* for indicating the powers of the different grades of Reality.

But the Classical *Sāṃkhya* has effaced God. We have the individual selves (*puruṣas*) on the one hand and *Prakṛti* on the other. *Prakṛti* is an automaton, constantly liable to change by its mechanical necessity without any intervention from an intellegent being. In this sense, *Prakṛti* is a self-sufficient and completely independent reality. The *Yoga* system has recognised the necessity of God as the primordial spiritual teacher; but, apart from this practical utility which is the characteristic of the *Yoga* system, God has no place in its scheme of creation. In other words, such God helps the individual soul (*puruṣa*) to discard ignorance (*Avidyā*) but He does not meddle with creation which is brought about by *Prakṛti* alone. It may be suggested that in both the Classical *Sāṃkhya* and the *Yoga*, the mere presence of *puruṣa* [*puruṣas* in the case of the former and a specific *puruṣa* (*puruṣa-viśeṣa*) viz, God in

¹⁵² *yat tat tri-guṇam a-vyaktaṁ nityaṁ sad-asad-ātmakam. pradhānam prakṛtiṁ prāhur a-viśeṣaṁ viśeṣa-vat.* 3.26.10

¹⁵³ *asrākṣid bhagavān viśvaṁ guṇa-mayyā'tma-māyayā.* 3.7.4ab

¹⁵⁴ *so'haṁ tad draṣṭum icchāmi yat te yoṣid-vapur dṛṣṭam.* 8.12.12cd
ātmā'mśa-bhūtāṁ tām māyāṁ bhavānirṇ bhagavān bhavaḥ. 8.12.42ab

the case of the latter] is all that is needed for the evolution of *Prakṛti*. But God's active co-operation is not anticipated by either of these two systems. The *Bhāgavata* goes a step further than the *Yoga* in its affirmation that God is the active agent both at every stage of the creative process as well as in bringing about the liberation of the individual souls. This follows logically from the *Bhāgavata* concept that *Māyā* as well as its different expressions like *Avidyā* and *Prakṛti* are all energies of God; even each of the three *guṇa*-reals deserves the recognition as God's energy;¹⁵⁵ and energy is but the creative dynamism of God Himself. If God's power expresses itself in the shape of creation and also works through the individual souls to deal with their personal problems, no body can still hold that God is a mere onlooker to the cosmic drama and not a participant in it as well.

So, God of the *Bhāgavata* engages Himself in creation. First of all, being the substratum of *Māyā*, God is the foundation (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of creation which is but the expression of *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* (*Prakṛti*), a mode of *Māyā*.¹⁵⁶ He further exerts Himself as the energy of Time which gives a start to the creative evolution from *Prakṛti* by disturbing the equilibrium of the three *guṇa*-reals, the constituents of *Prakṛti*.¹⁵⁷ The dominance of one of the three *guṇas* introduces variation in God's activity. When God impels *rajas*, creation is on; He galvanises *sattva* to exhibit divine play, and, desirous of winding up all activity, He drives *tamas* to prominence.¹⁵⁸ All this means that God is self-sufficient. *Prakṛti*, with its accessories, is brought about from God's being and they all operate, including the cosmic agents, under the overall supervision of God.¹⁵⁹ Being the emergent of *Prakṛti*, creation, subtle and gross, ex-

¹⁵⁵ *nīrodho'syā'nufayanam ātmanah saha śaktibhiḥ*. 2.10.6ab

¹⁵⁶ *yayā'ham etat sad-asat sva-māyayā*.
paśye mayi brahmaṇi kalpitam pare.. 1.5.27cd

¹⁵⁷ *sa khalvidam bhagavān kāla-śaktyā*
guṇa-pravāheṇa vibhaktā-vīryaḥ.. 4.11.18ab

¹⁵⁸ *yadā śiṣṭkṣuḥ pura ātmanah paro*
rajaḥ sṛjatyesa pṛthak sva-māyayā.
sattvaṁ vicitrāsu riraṁsur īśvaraḥ
śaiṣyamānas tama īrayatyasau.. 7.1.10

¹⁵⁹ *so'pyamśa-guṇa-kālātmā bhagavad-dṛṣṭi-gocaraḥ*,
ātmānam vyākaroḍ ātmā viśvaśyā'sya śiṣṭkṣayā.. 3.5.28

presses the nature of the three *guṇas*; and, in relation to God it may be looked upon as His cosmic form.¹⁶⁰ Thus we arrive at the pantheistic concept where God is in the world and the world is in God. But from the metaphysical standpoint, both the physical forms, the gross and the subtle, including *Prakṛti*, the primordial cause, are phenomenal and they pale into nothingness before the all-consuming divine splendour (*sva-saṁvit*) of the Absolute.¹⁶¹

Now, if unity of consciousness is the central truth of the *Bhāgavata* why should the individual soul suffer? If creation is the emanation of God why should the entanglement of the individual soul with creation—a physical body and a physical environment—be the source of sorrow? The *Bhāgavata* has recognised the concept of *Avidyā*, largely on the lines of the *Yoga*, to account for sufferings on the earth. *Avidyā* has invaded the mind of man. The *Bhāgavata* recognises that immediately after the birth of mind, *Avidyā* is there to take possession of it.¹⁶² Of course, *Avidyā* starts its operation first on intellect (*buddhi*) which is then polluted by doubts and speculations (*vikalpa*). They then percolate through *all* that emerge from intellect, including mind, and take definite shapes as they grow in dimensions.¹⁶³ Under their sway, intellect drifts along, without moorings, as a challenge to the very existence of the soul.¹⁶⁴ *Avidyā* of the *Bhāgavata* is not a negative concept, mere absence of knowledge, but is a positive reality opposed to knowledge. As a dark shadow on intellect, *Avidyā* shuts out the vision of Reality (*ātma-lokā'varaṇa*)¹⁶⁵ and presents instead a

¹⁶⁰ *sa vācya-vācakatayā bhagavān brahma-rūpa-dhṛk. 2.10.36ab*
amuni bhagavad-rūpe mayā te hyanuvarṇite.
ubhe api na gṛhṇanti māyā-sṛṣṭe vipścītaḥ. 2.10.35

¹⁶¹ *yatreṃśaśad-asad-rūpe pratīdīdheḥ sva-saṁvidā.*
avidyayā'tmani kṛte iti tad brahma-darśanam. 1.3.33

¹⁶² *śaṣṭhas tu tamaśo sargo yas tvabuddhi-kṛtaḥ prabho. 3.10.17cd*

¹⁶³ *moha-vikalpa-hetur vaikārikaḥ. 11.22.33 cd*

¹⁶⁴ *ātma'parijñāna-mayo vivādo*
hyastīti nāstī'ti bhidā'rtha-niṣṭhaḥ.
vya'rtho'pi naivoparameta pumsām
mattaḥ parāvṛtta-dhiyām sva-lokā't. 11.22.34

¹⁶⁵ *icchāmi kālena na yasya viplavaś*
tasyā'tma-lokā'varaṇasya mokṣam. 8.3.25cd vide also 10.14.44

counterfeit world.¹⁶⁸ Although the body and the soul are radically different yet *Avidyā* forges identity between the two¹⁶⁷ and all types of relationship, which directly refer to body, are imposed upon the soul, as a result. Thus is created a world of relationship and the physical world is split into the dichotomy of "I and Mine" on the one hand and "Thou" on the other, based on the world of relationship.¹⁶⁸ The sense of dichotomy is then the outcome of *Avidyā* and is recognised by the *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* under the name "*abhimāna*" or "*ahantā*" (egoity) and is said to possess *Ahaṃkāra*, the category to emerge directly from intellect (*Mahat*). Attachment for "I and Mine" and detachment from its negative counterpart, "Thou", follow in its trail¹⁶⁹ and they are known to the *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* under the names "*rāga*" and "*dveṣa*" respectively. Delusion further deepens¹⁷⁰ and the world of self-interest discards and replaces the world of God. The individual soul wistfully clings to its personal world thus wrought out by *Avidyā* and is under constant fear (*abhiniveśa* of Patañjali) lest it should slip away in spite of constant vigilance. Thus the snare of delusion (*moha-pāśa*) is completed.¹⁷¹

This is the *Bhāgavata* conception of *Avidyā* acquiring five designations—*taṃsa*, *moha*, *mahāmoha*, *tāmisra* and *andha-tāmisra*—according as its delusive effect deepens progressively, standing for spiritual blindness, egoity, attachment, detachment and fear of death respectively. They are, in fact, the progressive stages of the same principle viz, *Avidyā* (*pañca-parvā*) and in so far as it obliterates the transcendental nature of the soul it is the antithesis of knowledge (*chāyā*).¹⁷² Unlike, for

¹⁶⁸ *ātma-māyā'yaṇaṃ hareḥ.*

ābhātyapārthaṃ nir-mūlaṃ viśva-mūlaṃ na yad bahiḥ.

3.7.16 vide also 3.7.10, 4.12.15, 9.9.48

¹⁶⁷ *tvam-māyayārthaṃ abhipadya kalevare'smin
kṛtvā mamā'ham-iti dur-matir ut-pathaiḥ svaiḥ.* 4.7.44ab

¹⁶⁸ *kva deho bhautiko'nā'tmā kva cā'tmā prakṛteḥ paraḥ
kasya ke pati-putrā'dyā moha eva hi kāraṇam..*

8.16.19 vide also 10.8.42

¹⁶⁹ *aho māyā-balaṃ viṣṇoḥ sneha-baddham idaṃ jagat.* 8.16.18cd

¹⁷⁰ *yan-māyayā mohita-cetasas tvāṃ
viduḥ sva-saṃsthaṃ na bahiḥ-prakāśāḥ.* 9.8.22cd

¹⁷¹ *kāma-karmendriyāśayaḥ moha-pāśaḥ.* 9.8.26bc

¹⁷² *sasarja cchāyā'vidyāṃ pañca-parvāṇaṃ agrataḥ.* 3.20.18ab

example, "*abhimāna*" of the *Sāṃkhya*, all the different five-fold expressions of *Avidyā* are impositions on the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) ascribed by *Avidyā* to the soul. Whether *antaḥ-karaṇa* is, as conceived by the *Yoga*, a composite reality called "*citta*" or, as in the *Sāṃkhya* and the *Bhāgavata*, a complex of intellect (*Buddhi*), individuation (*Ahaṁkāra*) and mind (*Manas*), one giving rise to the other, i.e., whether it is a unitary or a complex reality, intellect-individuation-mind is the haunting ground of *Avidyā* which knits into existence an egotistic world of personal hopes and desires, distinct from the objective world of God. So man's world is different from God's world but in so far as God's world serves as the peg on which man hangs his own, God's world is said to delude man.¹⁷³ It follows that creation, by itself, is not an evil, because it is the emanation of God. Man makes an evil of it because of his perverted outlook. So the defect lies in man as it is his responsibility to remove such defect. If man has created the wrong it falls on him to rectify it. So, in God's world man is left with a free will to eke out his own destiny, heaven or hell, the bliss which never fails or the abyss of darkness which entails endless misery. If man could but see beyond his own the God's world, the evergrowing sorrows of man would be reduced to minimum! But somehow that is not to be. So, the perennial need of philosophy as a reminder.

Away from the unity of consciousness, *Avidyā* flies to and settles in the intellect of the individual soul and gradually effects cleavage and fragmentation¹⁷⁴ that breaks through the basic 'at-oneness' of the individual soul with God's creation. Delusion developed in five stages, called by Patañjali as the "*kleśas*" (afflictions), brings about the empirical life of man. In fact, pervasion by *Avidyā*, distraction of intellect and empirical life follow one another in easy succession.¹⁷⁵ The individual soul having lost its integral vision becomes embroiled in pragmatic life marked by action and inevitably leading to the cycles of

¹⁷³ *yad-yoga-māyā-guṇa-yoga-mohitaṁ
viśvaṁ samastaṁ bhagavan vidhehi śam.* 3.13.45cd

¹⁷⁴ *bahu-rūpā ivā'bhāti māyayā bahu-rūpayā.*
2.9.2ab, vide also 7.5.11, 10.54.45

¹⁷⁵ *yatropajātaṁ upasarpati deva-māyā
mithyā-matir yad anu saṁsṛti-caḥram etat.* 3.31.20cd

birth and death. The instinctive nature of the soul seeks to satisfy pragmatic ends through the path of action though such path might have at its back the sanction of sacred convention of the Scriptures.¹⁷⁶ The satisfaction of instinctive life nourishes it further to crave more intensely for fresh food of earthly pleasures. Thus the process repeats itself: Delusion (*kleśas*) gives rise to action (*Karman*) which engenders pleasure and pain (*viṣāka*) which in their turn feed and strengthen the subliminal tendencies (*āśaya*) adding fresh impetus to delusion and so on. To labour under the compulsion of *Avidyā* and all that it leads to is the bondage of the individual soul. While groaning under it the limited ego lives in perpetual predicament, away from the creative contact of the Divine, the personal God Who has always permeated the ego's being yet Whose pulsation is not felt within.¹⁷⁷

But should this be the end of the empirical ego without redemption—the inevitable destiny from which there is no hope for escape? The *Bhāgavata* has described God to be the all-pervasive light of the spirit (*viṣṇur adhyātma-dīpaḥ*).¹⁷⁸ Its native splendour (*Cit-śakti*) kindles *Vidyā*, the third product of *Māyā* (besides *Avidyā* and *Prakṛti*) which God has implanted in the intellect of the ego as a free gift and which is ever awaiting its revival through action on the part of the ego by the exercise of its free will. Here then is the gospel of liberation. God is waiting for man and it is for man to go and meet Him.

From the ultimate point of view unity is constantly flowing into plurality and plurality is gaining its highest fulfilment in its unity restored. But if the calm and the serene is to reign over the distracting plurality, the triumph of unity is inevitable

¹⁷⁶ *śabdasya hi brahmaṇa eṣa panthā
yan nāmabhir dhyāyati dhīr apārthaiḥ.
paribhrāṁs tatra sa vindate'rīṭhān
māyā-maye vāsanayā layānaḥ.. 2.2.2 vide also 3.14.26*

¹⁷⁷ *nūnaṁ vateśasya samihitaṁ janaiḥ
tan-māyayā dur-jayayā'kṛtā'tmabhiḥ.
na lakṣyate yas tvakarod akārayad
no'neka ekaḥ parataś ca īśvaraḥ.. 4.17.32 vide also 10.37.11*

¹⁷⁸ *sattā-mātraṁ nir-viśeṣaṁ nir-īhaṁ
sa tvaṁ sākṣād viṣṇur adhyātma-dīpaḥ. 10.3.24cd*

because it declares the sovereignty of Divine Sport, the resting place of all philosophical speculations where intellectualism is silenced by the tranquillity of integral vision of non-dual consciousness.¹⁷⁹ The *Bhāgavata* conception of *Vidyā*, *Avidyā* and *Prakṛti* is a reminder of this perfect state of harmony.

¹⁷⁹ *sa eṣa prakṛtiḥ sūkṣmāḥ daivīm guṇa-mayīm vibhuk-
yad-ṛcchayaivopagatām abhyapadyata līlayā.. 3.26.4*

CHAPTER XI

THE PRINCIPLE OF TIME

According to the *Bhāgavata*, the characteristic feature of the principle of Time (*Kāla*) consists in its disturbing the equilibrium of *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* i.e., *Prakṛti*.¹ This definition of the principle of Time suggests that the creative process presupposes the existence of Time which, therefore, cannot be considered as a part of the material creation. Time, then, is a supra-phenomenal reality. Indeed, the *Bhāgavata* refers to the view which, in due recognition of the important status of Time, extolled it, in lieu of God, to be the regulator of the pragmatic life of man. Similar views were expressed with regard to Action (*Karman*), Nature (*Svabhāva*), Providence (*daiva*) and Demiurge (*kāma*).² But, the *Bhāgavata* has chosen to incorporate all these in *Māyā*.³ The *Bhāgavata* includes Providence in Action and Demiurge in Divine Will and recognises the rest i.e., Time, Action and Nature to co-operate with the Lord while He is engaged in creation, with the help of His *Cit-śakti* and *Māyā*. As an expression of *Māyā*, Time is a power (*vīrya*),⁴ a dynamism (*Kālā*)⁵ of God; and as a force driving the cosmic process to materialise into subtle and gross creations, it can be described as God's effort (*ceṣṭā*),⁶ although

¹ *kālād guṇa-vyatikaraḥ*. 2.5.22a vide also 3.20.12, 3.26.17

² *kecit karma vadantyaenam svabhāvam apare nṛpa.*
eke kalam pare daivam pumsaḥ kāmam utāpare.. 4.11.22

³ *esa bhūtāni bhūtātmā bhūteṣo bhūta-bhāvanah.*
sva-śaktiā māyayā yuktah sṛjatyatti ca pāti ca.. 4.11.26

⁴ *sa eva bhūyo nija-vīrya-coditām*
sva-jīva-māyām prakṛtiṁ sisṛkṣatīm.
.....*anusasāra śāstra-kṛt..* 1.10.22abd

⁵ *eko nārāyaṇo devaḥ pūrva-sṛjtaṁ svamāyayā.*
saṁhṛtya kāla-kalayā kalpā'nte idam īvaraḥ.. 11.9.16

⁶ *sa khalvidam bhagavān kāla-śaktiā*
guṇa-pravāheṇa vibhakta-vīryaḥ.
karotyakartava nihantyaḥantā
ceṣṭā vibhūmaḥ khalu dur-vibhāvayā.. 4.11.18

vide also 10.3.26, 3.6.2-3

it may escape the certitude of precise definition and discernment. As dynamism (*śakti* or *Kalā*) pertains to the very nature of God's being, Time is God Himself. In fact, the *Bhāgavata* takes the same Reality to pervade the mind of man as his inner controller (*Puruṣa*), and the external universe as Time.⁷ But Time as related to the flux of physical existence may also be conceived as an empirical reality. Distinguished from the supra-material Time, such empirical reality—month or year—may be called the part (*avayava*) of the supra-material if we are to recognise basic unity between the supra-material and the material. Thus, from the standpoint of the *Bhāgavata*, Time may be looked upon to put on three forms: (i) God, (ii) His power and (iii) time-sequence. The first two concepts are metaphysical while the last one is empirical.⁸ When the *Bhāgavata* describes Time to be the twentyfifth⁹ among the *Sāṃkhya* categories it refers to the first concept; when it takes Time to be a power of *Puruṣa*¹⁰ it refers to the second and lastly, reference to Time in terms of year etc. is to be understood in the third sense.¹¹

It follows from such conception of Time that, as the power of motivation, Time does not confine its operation to the mere breaking of the equilibrium of tripartite matter but it pursues the creative process at every stage. The *Bhāgavata* describes how creation started with God as the agent cause and Time as an efficient cause. Through the operation of Time ten kinds of creation consisting in material (*prākṛta*), elemental (*vaikṛta*) and mixed (*prākṛta-vaikṛta*) were brought into existence. The material creation (*prākṛta*) falls into six manifestations from primordial matter (*Prakṛti*), viz, (i) *Mahat*, (ii) *Ahaṁkāra*, (iii) *Tanmātras*, (iv) external sense organs, (v) pre-

⁷ *antaḥ puruṣa-rūpeṇa kāla-rūpeṇa yo bahiḥ. samanvetyeṣa sattvānāṁ bhagavān ātma-māyayā..*

3.26.18 vide also 10.10.30

⁸ *kālāya kāla-nābhāya kālā'vayava-sākṣiṇe.*

namas tubhyaṁ bhagavate puruṣāya mahātmane. 10.16.39ab, 41ab

⁹ *yaḥ kālaḥ pañca-vimśakaḥ.* 3.26.15d

¹⁰ *prabhāvaṁ pauraṣaṁ prāhuḥ kalam eke* 3.26.16ab

¹¹ *na te jarā'kṣa-bhramir āyur eṣāṁ*

trayodaśā'raṁ tri-sataṁ ṣaṣṭi-parva.

ṣaṇṇemyananta-cchadī yat tri-nābhi

karāla-sroto jagad ācchidyā dhāvat.. 3.21.18

siding deities over the sense organs and the mind, and (vi) *Avidyā* with five knots.¹² The elemental (*vaikṛta*) is threefold:— (vii) vegetation, (viii) animals and (ix) human beings who are always active to eke out their own destiny.¹³ The mixed creation (*prākṛta-vaikṛta*) is represented by god-filled souls, the great personalities like Sanat-kumāra, Nanda etc. As they are divinely human they are called (x) *prākṛta-vaikṛtas*.¹⁴ The *Bhāgavata* further classifies the creation of gods (*deva-sarga*) into *prākṛta* and *vaikṛta* according as they have material or elemental bodies. While the presiding deities of the sense organs (noted above under v), constitute *prākṛta* type, the other gods, the Fathers, the demons etc.—altogether eight categories—come under *vaikṛta* because, according to the *Bhāgavata*, they have all elemental bodies.¹⁵

First, the enumeration of the ten types of creation gives us a glimpse of the evolutionary process at work: How from the psycho-physical organism of God (*Puruṣa*), gradually evolves, directly from the five subtle elements (*Tanmātras*), the elemental creation consisting of the physical worlds including our earth; how, then, gradually the face of the earth is covered with vegetation; how life appears in congenial circumstances, animals first and then man who organises his own species so that life itself can grow into something fruitful—a focussing point where both the physical demands on the one hand and the moral and the spiritual values on the other may converge. Thus, man and God come in close bond. Secondly,

¹² *ādyaś tu mahataḥ sargo guṇa-vaiśamyam ātmanaḥ.*
dvitīyaś tvahama yatra dravya-jñāna-kriyodayaḥ.
bhūta-sargas tyītyaś tu tan-mātro dravya-lakṣi-mān.
caturtha aindriyaś sargo yaś tu jñāna-kriyātmakaḥ..
vaikāriko deva-sargaḥ pañcamaś yan-mayaṁ manaḥ.
ṣaṣṭhaś tu tamasaḥ sargo yaś tvabuddhi-kṛtaḥ prabho..
ṣaḍ ime prākṛtāḥ sargāḥ.. 3.10.14-18

¹³ *saṭtama mukhya-sargas tu ṣaḍ-vidhaś tasthuṣāñ ca yaḥ.*
tiraścām aṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ.
arvāk-srotas tu navamaḥ kṣattar evaṁ-vidho nṛṇāṁ.
vaikṛtas traya evaite. 3.10.19ab, 21a, 26ab, 27a

¹⁴ *kaumāras tūbhayātmakaḥ.* 3.10.27d

¹⁵ *deva-sargaś ca sattama*
vaikārikas tu yaḥ proktaḥ.
deva-sargaś cāṣṭa-vidho vibudhāḥ pitaro'surāḥ.
gandharvā'psarasāḥ siddhā yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi cāraṇāḥ.
bhūta-preta-piśācāś ca vidyādhrāḥ kinnarā'dayaḥ.
 3.10.27bc, 28, 29ab

the classification of gods, as indicated by the *Bhāgavata*, is a pointer to the revolutionary changes which *Vedic* gods have undergone under the aegis of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. They are all dislodged from their paramount status—Indra and Varuṇa are no exceptions to it—and are assigned positions akin to those of the demons, the ghosts and other evil forces, although Fathers, musicians and other divine angels (*cāraṇas*) are also clustered in the same assembly. On the other hand, gods who fare best are the presiding deities of the sense organs, frequently referred to in the *Upaniṣads* in the context of the establishment of superiority of the vital airs (*mukhya-prāṇa*) to the sense organs. The *Bhāgavata* therefore may be said to be confirming the position of the *Upaniṣads*, in this respect.

Besides Time being God and the power of motivation, it deserves some consideration as sequence. The physical world represents a hierarchy in point of extension (*parimāṇa*), from the minutest particular (*paramāṇu*) to the largest general (*parama-mahat*) constituting the totality of the twelve stars (*dvādaśa-rāśyātmaka*)¹⁶ for which the *Bhāgavata* has used a collective name, "*bhuvana-kośa*". The sun moves across this physical world (This is just the other way round since the days of Copernicus.) and the time occupied for its crossing of the atom (*paramāṇu*) is called "*paramāṇu*" corresponding to the dimension crossed. Similarly, the time occupied by the sun for revolving round the "*bhuvana-kośa*" is called "*parama-mahat*" or year. In between these two lie the different divisions of time—*dyaṇuka*, *tryasareṇu*, *lava*, *yāma*, *dina*, *māsa* etc.¹⁷ This is the ordinary concept of time defined in terms of the velocity of the earth in the solar system.

From here the *Bhāgavata* soars to mythology. A year of man is a day (consisting of the day and the night) of god;¹⁸ and, corresponding to man's hundred years, the highest limit of his longevity, gods also live up to one hundred years consi-

¹⁶ *dvādaśasvopi māseṣu devo'sau ṣaḍbhīr asya vai. caran samantāt tanute paratreha ca san-matim..* 12.12.46

¹⁷ 3.11.1-14 especially the following:—
graharkṣa-tārā-cakra-sṭhaḥ paramāṇvādinā jagat. saṁvatsarā'vasāne ca paryetyanimiṣo vibhuḥ.. 3.11.13

¹⁸ *sūrya-rathasya merum parikrāmataḥ saṁvatsarā'tmakam cakram devānām aho-rātrābhyām paribhramati.* 5.20.30

dered in terms of the equation: man's one year = god's one day. If we call god's year as divine year (*divya-varṣa*) then the four "yugas" will constitute a total of twelve thousand divine years. As one *yuga* (era) imperceptibly gives rise to another that follows it, it is difficult to ascertain where the previous *yuga* has ended and where the succeeding one has begun. But the end and the beginning require due cognizance. This end or the beginning is somewhat different from the full swing of the *yuga* itself. These facts have been duly recognised by the *Bhāgavata*. If we describe the setting of a *yuga* as the evening twilight (*sandhyāṁśa*) and the rise of another as the morning twilight (*sandhyā*) and also take into consideration the introduction of the four *yugas* in cyclic order, then each *yuga* is prefixed by a *sandhyā* and suffixed by a *sandhyāṁśa*. If equity is equality then both these parts of a *yuga* should be taken of equal length, though such length in all legitimacy should be much lesser than that of the *yuga* itself. Finally, if the golden age (*satya*) is the ideal and the succeeding ones present a picture of steady deterioration, the moral nature of the universe requires that the succeeding *yugas* should be replaced more and more quickly to ensure the restoration of the lost "paradise" i.e., the golden age.

These ideas have influenced the classification of the *yugas* in terms of divine years as follows^{28a} :—

	<i>satya</i>	<i>tretā</i>	<i>dvāpara</i>	<i>kalī</i>	<i>div. yrs.</i>
<i>sandhyā</i>	400	300	200	100 =	1000
<i>yuga</i>	4000	3000	2000	1000 =	10000
<i>sandhyāṁśa</i>	400	300	200	100 =	1000
	4800	3600	2400	1200 =	12000

Beyond the three worlds, in the upper regions from *Maharloka* to *Satya-loka*, one thousand of four *yugas* form a single

^{28a} *kṛtaṁ tretā dvāparaṁ ca kalī ceti catur-yugam.*
divyair dvādaśabhir varjair sāvadhānam nirūpitaṁ..
catvāri trīṇi dve caikaṁ kṛtāḍiṣu yathā-kramam.
saṁkhyātāni sahasrāṇi dvi-guṇāni śatāni ca..
sandhyā-sandhyāṁśayor antar yaḥ kālaḥ śata-saṁkhyayoh.
tam evāhur yugam taj-jñā yatra dharmo vidhīyate.. 3.11.18-20

day (*kalpa*) of Brahmā. His night falls to the same length. By the time Brahmā's day draws to its close, fourteen Manus who are placed in charge of the three worlds below, complete their career.¹⁹ Hence individual Manu rules for a period of a little over seventyone *yugas*. In every era of a Manu, called *Manvantara*, kings in the lineage of the Manu are born in succession. Hermits, gods and angels bless these worlds by their birth. The three worlds, placed in charge of the fourteen Manus, constitute the daily creation of Brahmā. With the approach of Brahmā's night, the three worlds merge into him when a veil of cosmic darkness appears and cosmic fire consumes all. Storms agitate the oceans which establish themselves in the vacuum left by the three worlds. When the convulsions of the elements cease, there appears on the surface of unending expanse of water, Lord Viṣṇu reclined on the bed of *Ananta*. He is then engrossed in super-cosmic sleep (*yoga-nidrā*) with the attending bards from the higher regions.²⁰

It will be seen from the above description that the *Bhāgavata* sticks here to the *Vedic* conception of the three worlds, *dyau*, *prthivī* and *antarikṣa*—the sky, the earth and the intermediate space. The *Vedic* cosmogony propagated by the *Nāsadiya-Sūkta*²¹ and further elaborated by the *Hiraṇya-garbha-Sūkta*²² presupposes cosmic water, Viṣṇu, the primordial creator, and Brahmā who rested in Viṣṇu and eventually brought the three worlds into existence. As Brahmā had to exist in space

¹⁹ *catur-yuga-sahasraṁ tu brahmaṇo dinam ucyate.
sa kalpo yatra manavaś catur-daśa viśāṁ-pate..
tad-ante pralayas tāvān brāhmī rātrir udāhṛtā.* 12.4.2, 3ab

²⁰ *manvantareṣu manavaś tad-vaṁśyā śṛyaś surāḥ.
bhavanti caite yugapat sureśāś cānu ye ca tān.
eṣa daivāndinaś sargō brāhmaś trailokya-vartanaś.
tiryaṅ nṛ-pitṛ-devānāṁ sambhavo yatra karmabhiḥ..
manvantareṣu bhagavān bibhṛat sattvaṁ sva-mūrtibhiḥ.
kalenā-nugatā-leśa āste tūṣṇīm dinā'tyaye..
tam evānvapīdhīyante lokā bhūr-ādayaś trayaḥ.
niśāyāṁ anuvṛttāyāṁ nirmukta-śaśi-bhāskaram..
tri-lokyāṁ dahyamānāyāṁ śaktyā saṁkaraṣaṇā'gninā.
tāvat tri-bhuvanaṁ sadyaḥ kalpā'ntaidhīta-sindhavaḥ.
plāvayantyukaśā'ṭopa-caṇḍa-vateritormayaḥ..
antaḥ sa tasmin salile āste'nantā'sano hariḥ.
yoga-nidrā-nimilā'kṣaḥ stūyamāno janā'layaiḥ..*

3.11.25, 26, 27ab, 28cd, 29, 30ab, 31, 32

²¹ RV 10.129

²² RV 10.121

before he created the three worlds, the upper regions had to be conceived. Such regions also served as answers to the various types of moral deeds performed by the beings on the earth.

Brahmā's longevity runs up to one hundred years made of cosmic days and nights, noted above. Half of this span of life is called "*parārdha*" (the grand half). Brahmā's longevity therefore is made up of two such grand halves (*dvi-parārdha*). On the first day of the first grand half Brahmā was born as "*śabda-brahman*". His birthday was marked as "*brāhma-kalpa*". He appeared in the cosmic lotus the next day known accordingly as "*pādma-kalpa*". The first day of the second grand half is known as "*varāha-kalpa*" in that God has assumed the form of a boar to liberate earth and its light (*Vedas*) from cosmic deluge marked by the dissolution of the three worlds (*naimittika-pralaya*).²³

According to the *Bhāgavata*, Brahmā was, as we shall see later on²⁴, "*śabda-brahman*" as the intelligent principle underlying *Mahat*, the first category to emerge from *Prakṛti*. Brahmā was "*śabda-brahman*" in that he represented the element of "*kriyā-śakti*" or the vital breath (*mukhya-prāṇa*) of *Mahat*, which serves as the source of the primordial sound (*śabda*), "*om*", and also in that Brahmā stood for *Mahat* that further bursts into creation, both subtle and gross (*brahman*). It took as long a period as a *kalpa* for *Mahat* to attain through its evolutionary process the stage of five gross elements condensed into the cosmic egg (*aṇḍa*). Such egg is also conceived as a lotus (*padma*), a speck of finitude against the limitless spirit (*Viṣṇu*). Marked by this lotus, in which Brahmā settled for the purpose of creation of the worlds, he was called "*padma-*

²³ *asyā'pi paramāyur vayah-satam.
yad ardhm āyusas tasya parārdham abhidhiyate.
pūrvasyā'dau parārdhasya brāhma nāma mahān abhūt.
kalpo yatrā'bhavat brahmā śabda-brahmeti yaṁ viduḥ..
tasyaivānte ca kalpo'bhūd yaṁ pādmam abhicakṣate.
yad dharer nābhi-sarasa āsīt loka-saroruham..
ayaṁ tu kathitaḥ kalpo dvitīyasā'pi bhārata.
varāha iti vikhyāto yatrā'sīt sūkarō hariḥ.. 3.11.33d, 34ab, 35-37*

²⁴ Ch. 14 pp. 333-35.

yonī” (lotus-born).²⁵ Brahmā was thus the creator in two senses: He was the presiding deity of *Mahat*, the source of subtle creation ; and, he was also in the cosmic egg or the lotus, the source of gross creation. Both *Mahat* and the egg (or the lotus) are said to be golden because both had dispelled the cosmic gloom that features deluge—*prākṛtika* in the case of *Mahat* and *naimittika* in the case of the egg or the lotus. The gloom in relation to *naimittika-pralaya* is the precursor of the egg or the lotus. As “*kriyā-śakti*” it was the continuance of the undeciphered sound “*om*” and as “*dravya-śakti*” (material aspect) it was all-encompassing mist (*nīhāra*). Brahmā had to leave his addiction to the indistinct sound (*om*), the offspring (daughter) of his own self, when penetrating the cosmic mist the cosmic egg (or the lotus) could emerge for the creation of the gross physical worlds.²⁶ Corresponding to this physical differentiation out of the mist, then came the four *Vedas* out of “*om*”.²⁷ As the emergence of the worlds and the wisdom treasured in the *Vedas* are ultimately derived from the pre-eminence (*varāha*)²⁸ of God whose power Brahmā has borrowed for creation, the “*pādma-kalpa*” gave place to “*varāha-kalpa*”, after first grand half was completed.

Thus, the *Bhāgavata* conceives three hierarchical grades of Time in relation to man, gods and Brahmā, the creator of the three worlds ; and, such grades are based on the longevity of man, gods and Brahmā. The longevity of gods and Brahmā, infinitely longer than that of man, seems to have been founded on the longevity of man, running up to one hundred years. As

²⁵ *so'ṣaṣṭā'bdhi-salile aṇḍa-koṣo nir-ātmakah.*
sā'grām vai varṣa-sāhasram anuvātsīt tam īśvaraḥ..
tasya nābher abhūt padmaṁ sahasrār'koru-dīdhitī.
sarva-jīva-nikāyauko yatra svayam abhūt sva-rāṭ..
so'nupraviṣṭo bhagavatā yaḥ śete salilā'saye.
loka-saṁsthāṁ yathā-pūrvam nir-mame saṁsthayā svayā.. 3.20.15-17

²⁶ *vācam duhitaram tanvīm svayambhūr haritīm manah.*
a-kāmāṁ cakame kṣattah sa-kāma iti naḥ frutam..
prajā-pati-patis tanvaṁ tatyāja vriditas tadā.
tām diṣo jagrhur ghorāṁ nihāraṁ yad vidus tāmah.. 3.12.28, 33

²⁷ *kadācid dhyāyataḥ sraṣṭur vedā āsamś catur-mukhāt.*
katham sraṣṭyāmyaham lokān samavetān yathā purā.. 3.12.34

²⁸ *divo varāham aruṣaṁ kapardinaṁ*
tveṣaṁ rūpaṁ namaśā nī hwayāmahe. RV 1.114.5
 Here “*divo varāham*” refers to Rudra who occupies an eminent place in heaven, being the god of storm with lightning.

year is the unit of man's longevity, similarly *yuga* is the unit of the higher grades of time, viz, *manvantara*, *kalpa* and *dvi-parārdha*. As the time, the sun takes to cross an atom, is taken to be the lowest limit, so the longevity of *Brahmā* is taken to be the uppermost limit. What happens, then, when *Brahmā* spends up the whole gamut of his life? The answer is to be sought in the *Bhāgavata* conception of "*pralaya*" (deluge).

Time had initiated the original act of disturbance in the equilibrium of the tripartite *Prakṛti*, before creation started. That act has been endlessly repeating itself since that moment. If change be another name for death then creation bears in it the element of death. In the constant flux of phenomenal existence is visible the tide of time. Things are changing at every moment and there lies the hand of death, the principle of Time.²⁹ This is what the *Bhāgavata* calls momentary destruction (*nitya-pralaya*) which does not require additional cause excepting Time itself. The periodical destruction (*naimittika-pralaya*), on the other hand, occurs when the three worlds merge in *Brahmā*.³⁰ But this is mere sleep of *Brahmā* after the day's work. A time comes when *Brahmā*'s life comes to its end. Then all creation, both gross and subtle, dissolves into *Prakṛti*, the primordial matter. This is what the *Bhāgavata* calls "*prākṛtika-pralaya*".³¹ Here Time restores the lost equilibrium of the three *guṇas*.³² At this dissolution, Time sweeps away all material creation including the abode of *Brahmā*, *Satya-loka*; and, this happens at the expiry of "*dvi-parārdha*".³³ According to the *Bhāgavata*, salvation also is a kind of deluge. Man obtains in course of time the intuitive vision of his higher

²⁹ *tvam eva kālo'nimiṣo janānām
āyur lavā'dyāvayavaiḥ kṣiṇoṣi.* 7.3.31ab

³⁰ *eṣa naimittikāḥ proktaḥ pralayo yatra viśva-sṛk.
lete'nantā'sano viśvam ātma-sāt-kṛtya cā'tma-bhūḥ..* 12.4.4

³¹ *dvi-parā'rdhe tvatikrānte brahmaṇaḥ paramaṣṭhinaḥ.
tadā prakṛtayaḥ sapta kalpante pralayāya vai..
eṣa prakṛtiko rājan pralayo yatra liyate.
aṇḍa-kośas tu saṁghāto vighāta upasādite..* 12.4.5, 6

³² *layaḥ prakṛtiko hyeṣa puruṣā'vyaktayor yadā.
īkṛtayaḥ sampalīyante vivasāḥ kāla-vidrutāḥ..* 12.4.22

³³ *sthānaṁ madiyaṁ saha-viśvam etat
kṛdā'vasāne dvi-parā'rdha-samjñe.
bhrū-bhaṅga-mātreṇa hi saṁdidhakoḥ
kāla'tmano yasya tiro'bhaṁsiyat..* 9.4.53

Self and thus extricates himself from his empirical personality (*Ahaṁkāra*). He then realises his nature untrammelled by any limitations.³⁴ As liberation is marked by the state of absolute annihilation of empirical life it is called "*ātyantika-pralaya*". According to the *Bhāgavata*, then, deluge is four-fold:—*nitya*, *naimittika*, *prākṛtika* and *ātyantika*.³⁵ Time brings about all these types with the difference that whereas in the first three types, Time continues its work to bring about fresh creation, in the fourth case it ceases to operate once for all; for, a liberated soul enters eternity that transcends time-space scheme. Again, as the first three types merely suggest change, great or small, in man's empirical life, Time in relation to these three types may be said to conduce to man's bondage while in relation to the fourth type it apparently leads to emancipation.³⁶

So, until emancipation Time steadily pursues man's mundane career. From the minutest particle down to the cosmic progenitor (*Brahmā*) all are under the sway of Time.³⁷ As an irrevocable force it operates on all and tantalises all efforts of resistance.³⁸ Like a string it binds the world,³⁹ like current it carries all alike in its midstream,⁴⁰ like a shepherd it regulates its herd of creation, both living and non-living, and like wind sweeping away clouds, straw, cotton or dust, it makes everything drifting along its own course. It is a part of this drifting that man comes in contact with man and moves away from

³⁴ *yadaivam etena viveka-hetinā
māyā-mayā'haṁkaraṇā'tma-bandhanam.
chitto'cyutā'tmā'nubhavo'vatiṣṭhate
tam āhur ātyantikam aṅga saṁplavam.. 12.4.34*

³⁵ *nityo naimittikaś caiva tathā prākṛtiko layaḥ.
ātyantikaś ca kathitaḥ kālasya gatir idṛśī.. 12.4.38*

³⁶ *viryāṇi tasyā'khila-deha-bhājām
antar-bakīḥ pūruṣa-kāla-rūpaiḥ.
prayacchato mṛtyum utā'mṛtañ ca
māyā-manuṣyasya vadasva vidvan.. 10.1.7*

³⁷ *sarvaṁ kāla-kṛtaṁ manye 1.9.14 vide also 11.6.15, 1.11.6*

³⁸ *bhūteṣu kālasya gatim darśayann a-pratikriyām 1.8.4cd
vide also 1.13.19, 8.21.22, 9.10.22*

³⁹ *tad idaṁ kāla-raśanaṁ jagat paśyanti sūrayaḥ. 8.11.8ab*

⁴⁰ *kālo bhavān ākṣipatiṣa viśvaṁ
sroto yathā'ntaḥ-patitaṁ gabhīram. 8.17.27cd*

him.⁴² Man is thus like a puppet in the hand of Time.⁴² The law of Time⁴³ stimulates man's action.⁴⁴ When Time smiles on man he is able to override the greatest of obstacles.⁴⁵ Otherwise, the cold hand of death abruptly removes him from the scene of his performances.⁴⁶ Time helps man to forget his past.⁴⁷ Time, ranging from atom (*paramāṇu*) to *dvi-parārdha*, is the great wheel of Viṣṇu⁴⁸ which the Lord employs for killing evil forces.⁴⁹ As the sun is the great divider of time⁵⁰ it is no wonder that the *Bhāgavata* would conceive year, a fragment of Time, in terms of a wheel on the analogy of the solar disc.⁵¹ The beautiful wheel (*sudarśana-cakra*) at one of the hands of Viṣṇu thus symbolises God's association with Time while he operates upon the cosmic process. Indeed the *Bhāgavata* takes Time to act as the medium of the influx of divine grace.⁵² Time is also described as the glance (*nimeṣa*) of the world-soul.⁵³

But, the inexorability of Time is fraught with difficulties.

⁴² *vāyur yathā ghanā'nikam tṛṣṇam tūlaṁ rajāmsi ca. saṁyojyā'kṣipyate bhūyas tathā bhūtāni bhūta-kṛt..* 10.82.43

⁴³ *vikriḍitaṁ te'rbhaka-ceṣṭitaṁ yathā* 10.39.19

⁴⁴ *kālo'yam artha-kṛt yaḥ prabhuḥ sarva-bhūtānām* 8.21.19d, 20a

⁴⁵ *kāla-codita-karmaṇām* 8.11.7b

⁴⁶ *apāraṇīyā iti devi me matiḥ yat te'nukūleśvara-vipraguptā* 8.17.16bc

⁴⁷ *yas tāvad asya balavān iha jīvita'lām sadyaś chinattyanimiṣāya namo'stu tasmai.* 3.9.17cd
vide also 10.70.26

⁴⁸ *prāk-kalpa-viṣayām etāṁ smṛtiṁ te muni-sattama. na hyeṣa vyavadhāt kāla eṣa sarva-nirākṛtiḥ..* 11.6.4.

⁴⁹ *bhagavato viṣṇoś cakrāt paramāṇvādi-dvi-parā'rdhā'pavarga-kālo-palakṣaṇāt ... īśvaraṁ kāla-cakra-nijā'yudham ...* 5.14.29

⁵⁰ *kāla-rūpo'vatirpo'syām a-bhavāya sura-dviṣāṁ* 1.13.49cd
vide also 7.4.26

⁵¹ *sūrya-rathasya.. saṁvatsarā'tmakam cakram..* 5.20.30

⁵² *na te'jarā'kṣa-bhramir āyur eṣāṁ trayodaśā'raṁ tri-śataṁ jaṣṭi-parva. jaṇṇemyananta-cchadi yat tri-nābhi karāla-sroto jagad ācchidya dhāvat..* 3.21.18

⁵³ *sa kāla iha kāraṇam puruṣaḥ prakṛtir vyaktam ātmā bhūtendriyā'sayaḥ. śaknuvāṇīyasya sargā'dau na vinā yad-anugrahāt..* 6.12.8d, 11

⁵⁴ *kālo'yam dvi-parā'rdhā'khyo nimeṣa upacaryate. avyākṛtasyā'nantasya hyanāder jagad-ātmanah..* 3.11.38

The *Bhāgavata* extols the supremacy of Destiny (*Daiva*) with equal emphasis.⁵⁴ Destiny is also said to govern all human behaviour and to prevail over all.⁵⁵ Time and Destiny may forge a compromise if we hold the view that interaction between Time and Destiny regulates the life of man. And, if we take both Destiny and Time to be expressions of the Divine, then God who rules both over matter and the individual spirit may be said to include both Destiny and Time in His being.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, from the practical point of view a difficult problem stares us in the face. If Time and Destiny determine the empirical life and all that such life means, then they are bound to rule out the scope of free will which, on all hands, seems to be the free gift from God. Such determinism reduces man to a helpless machine. The *Bhāgavata* does not seem to take such a limited view. When the *Bhāgavata* affirms that man reaps the benefit of his own action⁵⁷ it thereby seems to take due cognizance of the free will of man left to choose his own course. What man does in consequence of this choice is credited in his favour as Destiny. Thus, if man is regulated by his Destiny he is no less free to build up that Destiny. Freedom and determinism appear to be two facets of life, which are as opposing to each other as mutually complementary. Life is thus a dialectic which is finally solved when man transcends it or when God's will intervenes.⁵⁸

If Time is the motivating force not only within creation but also *before* creation started, its nature has to differ from that of creation. Creation has a beginning and an end but Time enduring through both these stages of creation must have none of them in itself. Creation is liable to change but Time as the great changer must be free from it. So Time is a reality

⁵⁴ *kālena daiva-yuktena jānan vidrāvitaṁ jagat* 10.54.14cd

⁵⁵ *daivā'dhīneṣu kāmēṣu daivā'dhīnaḥ svayaṁ pumān.* 3.3.23ab
vide also 4.11.24
adṛṣṭa-paramo janaḥ 10.5.30b

⁵⁶ *etad bhagavato rūpaṁ brahmaṇaḥ paramātmanaḥ.
param pradhāna-puruṣaṁ daivaṁ karma-vicēṣṭitam..
rūpa-bhedā'spadaṁ divyaṁ kāla ityabhidhīyate.
bhūtānāṁ mahad-ādīnāṁ yato bhinna-dṛṣṭāṁ bhayaṁ..* 3.29.36-37

⁵⁷ *sva-kṛta-bhuk pumān* 10.54.38d

⁵⁸ *a-mogha-vāñchitaḥ (hariḥ)* 3.4.29

that knows no beginning, end or change.⁵⁰ One might say somewhat paradoxically that Time is free from the limitations of time. It is eternal⁶⁰ though as the dynamism of God it may be looked upon as an emergence from God.⁶¹ Everybody submits to Time excepting the liberated souls who enter the state of immortality and thus transcend the barrier of Time.⁶² The *Bhāgavata* is prepared to extend this privilege to the god-filled souls on the earth as well.⁶³

⁵⁰ *so'nanto'nta-karaḥ kālo'nādir ādi-kṛt avyayaḥ*. 4.11.19
vide also 3.29.45

⁶⁰ *kālā'tmanas ca nityatvāt* 7.3.10c

⁶¹ vide above 3.11.38 ref. 53

⁶² *sa eṣa sākṣāt puruṣaḥ purāṇo*
na yatra kālo vīṣate na vedaḥ. 8.12.44cd vide also 9.4.67

⁶³ Śrīdhara comments on 3.21.18:— *kāla-cakram.. jagad ākṣya dhā-*
vad api.. tvad-bhaktānām āyur ācchidya dhāvan na bhavati

CHAPTER XII

THE PRINCIPLE OF ACTION

The condition which, next to Time, operates at the beginning of the cosmic process is Action (*Karman*). When *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā (Prakṛti)*, under the stress of Time, Action and Nature (*Svabhāva*) and with the overall control of God, solidifies itself into the subtle and gross universe, then also, Action is directly responsible for the production of happiness and sorrow which consists in the empirical life of the individual soul. From the metaphysical point of view the soul is absolutely unrelated to empirical life; because, being one with God it is transcendental reality. The root of empirical life lies in *Avidyā*, the false knowledge which, on the one hand, rules out the vision of Reality, and, on the other, brings about a false identification of the Soul with the non-soul—the gross and the subtle bodies.¹ The soul develops, as a consequence, a sense of individualism (*aham̐tā*) and ascribes to itself the properties of the non-soul.² The sense of individualism expressed in terms of "I and Mine" (*aham̐-mameti*) sets up a dichotomy between God's creation and the world of dream created by individualistic imagination.³ The individual soul seeks to fulfil its desires through its world of dream. It resorts to appropriate actions to realise its purpose, reaps their benefits of pleasure and pain which lead in their turn to the enhancement of empirical cravings. Under their domination the individual soul ceaselessly engages itself to action which finds its fulfilment through innu-

¹ *idaṁ mano vai karmā'tmakam̐ yena śarīra-bandhaḥ. evaṁ manaḥ karma-vaśam̐ prayukte avidyayā'tmanyupadhiyamāne. 5.5.5cd, 6ab vide also 7.2.47, 7.7.47*

² *prāṇendriya-mano-dharmān ātmanyadhyasya nir-guṇaḥ. fete kāma-lavān dhyāyan mamā'ham-iti karma-kṛt.. 4.29.25*

³ *sa vāsanā'tmā viśayoparakto guṇa-pravāho vikṛtaḥ śoḍaśā'tmā. bibhrat pythān nāma bhī rūpa-bhedam̐ antaḥ-bahīṣṭvaṁ ca puraiḥ tanoti.. 5.11.5*

merable births and deaths.⁴ In this way empirical life is perpetuated for the individual soul.

Empirical life involves the engagement of the mind in the objects of the world. As usual, Time, Action and Nature give rise to disproportionate distribution of the three *guṇas* which constitute the essence of the mind.⁵ The respective *guṇas* originate corresponding actions, *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmāsa*, leading respectively to divine, human and animal births.⁶ The moral virtues like restraint of mind (*śama*), restraint of sense organs (*dama*), tolerance (*titikṣā*), meditation (*tapas*), truth (*satya*) and the like are the *sāttvika* modes of the mind. Desire (*kāma*), hectic efforts (*īhā*), exhibition of powers (*vīrya*) etc. stand for the *rājasa* modes. Anger, greed, falsehood and the like represent its *tāmāsa* expressions. The individual soul meets the world with any of these modes marked by the predominance of one of the three *guṇas*, with slight admixture of the other two *guṇas*. Besides these, the individual soul brings the ego (*abhimāna*) as a whole (*sannipāta*) to bear upon all empirical behaviours. Thus ordinary experience takes either of these two forms:—"I am peaceful" and "Peace abides in me". When a person feels attracted to the three pragmatic ends—*dharma* (ordinary morality), *artha* (profitable ends) and *kāma* (material pleasures), his mind exposes *sāttvika* mode in relation to *dharma*, *rājasa* mode in relation to *artha*, and *tāmāsa* mode towards objective pleasures. A closer analysis will reveal that the quality of *dharma* itself depends upon the quality of *sattva*, the latter quality being determined by the nature of admixture of the other two *guṇas*. Thus the *dharma* consisting in the performance of daily and occasional duties without selfish motive is predominantly *sāttvika*; it is less so when with a noticeable element of *rajas*, *dharma* is directed to selfish

⁴ *īṣṇāyā bhava-vāhinyā योग्यायै कामैर a-pūryayā. karmāṇi karyamāṇo'haṁ nānā-yoniṣu yojitaḥ.. 7.13.24*

⁵ *dravya-svabhavāśaya-karma-kālaḥ * ekādaśā'mi manaso vikārāḥ. sahasraśaḥ śataśaḥ koṣaśaś ca kṣetra-jña-to na mitho na svataḥ syuḥ.. 5.11.11*

⁶ *mano guṇān vai syjate baliyas tataś ca karmāṇi vilakṣaṇāni. śuklāni kṣṇānyatha lohitaṇi tebhyaḥ sa-varṇāḥ sṛtayo bhavanti.. 11.23.43*

actions (*kāmya-karman*); and *dharma* is at its minimum when *tamas* is allowed to prevail, e.g., in the domestic duties. Although all these types of *dharma* rise against the *sāttvika* background of the mind, yet because of their qualitative variations, *dharma* can be described as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*.⁷ Not only the mind reveals its tripartite nature but all necessary accessories for action, such as, the materials, time, place, rites, agents and the rest, expose the same constitution.⁸ In fact, real or imaginary, whatever falls within the purview of the cognitive process, direct or indirect, elicits a corresponding subjective response. The individual soul embroiled in the series of such response is said to live the empirical life.⁹

Indeed empirical life involves a vicious circle. Action dormant in the mind as subliminal tendencies (*vāsanā*) excites the constituent *guṇas* of the mind. The *guṇas* harness the organs to the objects of pleasure.¹⁰ The sense-organs and the action-organs are subjected to frantic operation to ensure the presence of one object or the other¹¹ in uninterrupted chain. The *Bhāgavata* has taken all these facts into consideration to classify the mental modes on the basis of their origin effected

⁷ *śamo dāmas titikṣeṣā tapaḥ satyaṁ dayā smṛtiḥ .
tuṣṭiḥ tyāgo'sprhā śraddhā hrir dayā'diḥ sva-nirvṛtiḥ . .
kāma ihā madas tṛṣṇā stambha āśir bhidā sukham .
madotsāho yaśaḥ prītir hāsyam vīryam baladyamaḥ . .
krodho lobho'nytam himsā yācñā dambhaḥ klamaḥ kaliḥ .
loka-mohau viśādā'rtti nidrā'sā bhir anudyamaḥ . .
sattvasya rajasaś caitās tamasaś cā'nupūrvaśaḥ .
vṛttayo varṇita-prāyāḥ sannipātam atho śṛṇu . .
sannipātaś tvaham-iti mametyuddhava yā matiḥ .
vyavahāraḥ sannipāto mano-mātrendriyā'subhiḥ . .
dharme cārthe ca kāme ca yadyasau pariniṣṭhitaḥ .
guṇāṇām sannikarṣo'yaṁ śraddhā-rati-dhanā'vahaḥ . .
pravṛtti-lakṣaṇe niṣṭhā pumān yarhi grhā'srame .
sva-dharme cānutiṣṭheta guṇāṇām samitir hi sā . . 11.25.2-8
Sṛidhara comments:— kāmyadharma-grhāsakti-svadharmaḥ rajas-
tamaḥ-sattva-mayā ityarthah .*

⁸ *dravyam deśaḥ phalam kālo jñānam karma ca kārakaḥ .
śraddhā'vasthā'kṛtir niṣṭhā traigunyaḥ sarva eva hi . . 11.25.30*

⁹ *etāḥ saṁsṛtayah puṁso guṇa-karma-nibandhanāḥ .
yeneme nir-jitāḥ saumya guṇā jivena citta-jāḥ . . 11.25.32 abcd*

¹⁰ *duḥkham sukham vyatiriktaṁ ca tioram
kālopapannam phalam āvyanakti .
ālīngya māyā-racitā'ntar-ātmā
sva-dehinam saṁsṛti-cakra-kūṭaḥ . . 5.11.6*

¹¹ *sarve kramā'nurodhena manasindriya-gocarāḥ .
āyānti bahuśo yānti sarve sa-manaso janāḥ . . 4.29.68*

by the impact of external objects through organs. The objects of the world are of ten categories corresponding to the ten types of organs, five cognitive and five conative. The mental modes are accordingly of ten categories. And if we add to them the generic reactions of the mind (viz, "I" and "Mine") the types of modes come to twelve. The individual soul is called "*puruṣa*" because of its identification with the "I" mode.¹² This means that empirical life is an imposition on the soul.¹³ *Puruṣa*, because of the imposition of mental modes on it, enjoys pleasure and pain. As a result material hunger increases, giving rise to fresh actions.¹⁴

Mental modes, whether considered as threefold—*sāttvika rājasa* and *tāmasa*—or twelvefold, as indicated above, are empirical in the sense that they are all stimulated by the sense of egoity—"I" and "Mine". To arrive at this conclusion the *Bhāgavata* examines at some length some of the older Theories regarding the origin of pleasure and pain. Neither the gross body nor the presiding deities of its different parts, it contends, can be the source of pleasure and pain, for, having no reference to the soul, they fail to explain the suffering of the soul. It cannot be said, on the other hand, that the soul has in itself the germ of suffering; for, then, the soul can never hope for redemption. Similarly, Time is not the cause of sufferings because Time is soul itself. The evil star (*graha*) or Action fails to be adequate explanation because the star may influence the body but it can have no bearing on the soul. Action also suffers from the same defect. It is grotesque to conceive that Action in one aspect has alliance with the soul, while, in another aspect, it has alignment with the body. Action cannot be the meeting ground of aspects radically different in nature. So, willynilly, the source of pleasure and pain has to be traced to the sense of egoity, brought about by the false identification of

¹² *gandhā'kṛti-sparśa-rasa-śravāṁsi
visarga-ratyarttyabhihāṣa-līlāḥ.
ekādalaṁ svikaraṇaṁ mameti
śayyāṁ ahaṁ dvādalaṁ eka āhuḥ.. 5.11.10*

¹³ *yathā yathā vikriyate guṇā'kto vikaroti vā.
tathā tathopadraṣṭātmā tad-ṛtīr anukāryate.. 4.29.17*

¹⁴ *dehā'dibhir daiva-tantrair ātmanaḥ sukham ihataḥ.
duḥkhā'tyayaṁ cā'nīlasya kriyā moghāḥ kṛtāḥ kṛtāḥ.. 7.13.30*

the soul with the non-soul.¹⁵ It follows that the mind by itself is neither good nor bad. It courts the chain of bondage when labouring under various modes, or rather to go their source, under *Avidyā*. So, the *Bhāgavata*, in the wake of Patañjali, recommends the suppression of mental modes, but it is aware that spiritual awareness (*śamādhi*) is the end that one should strive for, because, being the direct vision of Reality, *śamādhi* dispels *Avidyā* in all its bearings.¹⁶ For instance, a *Jīvan-mukta*—the enlightened soul still living in the physical body—disinterestedly witnesses the parade of phenomenal experiences inevitably brought about by his previous actions which have now borne fruit.¹⁷ Instead of coming in succession as hitherto—before they all appear together before his integral vision, like

¹⁵ *janas tu hetuḥ sukha-duḥkhaḥ cet
kim ātmanas cātra hi bhaumayoḥ tat.
jihvām kvacit sandaśati svadadbhis
tad-vedanāyām katamāya kupyet..
duḥkhasya hetur yadi devatās tu
kim ātmanas tatra vikārayas tat.
yad aṅgam aṅgena niḥanyate kvacit
krudhyeta kasmāi puruṣaḥ sva-dehe..
ātmā yadi syāt sukha-duḥkha-hetuḥ
kim anyatas tatra nija-svabhāvaḥ.
nahyātmano'nyad yadi tan mṛjā syat
krudhyeta kasmān na sukhaḥ na duḥkham..
grahā nimittam sukha-duḥkhaḥ cet
kim ātmano'sya janasya te vai.
grahair grahasyaiva vadanti pīḍām
krudhyeta kasmāi puruṣas tato'nyaḥ..
karmā'stu hetuḥ sukha-duḥkhaḥ cet
kim ātmanas tad hi jaḍā'jaḍatve.
dehas tvacit-puruṣo'yaṁ suparṇaḥ
krudhyeta kasmāi nahi karma-mūlam..
kālas tu hetuḥ sukha-duḥkhaḥ cet
kim ātmanas tatra tad-ātmako'sau
nā'gner hi tāpo na himasya tat syat
krudhyeta kasmāi na parasya dvandvam..
na kenacit kvā'pi kathañcanā'sya
dvandvo parāgaḥ parataḥ parasya.
yathā'hamāḥ saṁśṛti-rūpiṇaḥ syād
evaṁ prabuddho na bibheti bhūtair.. 11.23.50-56*

¹⁶ *dānaṁ svadharmaṁ niyamaṁ yamaḥ ca
brutaṁ ca karmāṇi ca sad-vratāni.
sarve mano-nigraha-lakṣaṇāntaḥ
paro hi yogo manasaḥ śamādhiḥ.. 11.23.45*

¹⁷ *mukto'pi tāvad bibhīyāt sva-deham
ārabdham aśnann abhimāna-śūnyaḥ.
yathā'nubhūtaṁ pratiyāta-nidraḥ
kintu'anya-dehāya guṇān na vṛñkte.. 5.1.16*

a shadow over the moon.¹⁸ At last, with the exhaustion of all actions comes beatitude, the disembodied liberation achieved with the help of the mind. Hence the mind is the instrument of both bondage and liberation.¹⁹

Action dwells, according to the *Bhāgavata*, in the mind which is a part, though the most important one, of the psychic or subtle body. Such body consists in sixteen principles—five sense organs, five action organs, mind-ego-intellect, and five subtle elements.²⁰ That such a body does exist, distinct from the gross body, is evidenced by the fact that one does experience pleasure and pain even in dream when the gross body lies completely inactive.²¹ The same body persists even after death when the individual soul transmigrates from one body to another to enjoy the fruits of action.²² As the disorderly activities of the sense organs presuppose a mind as the principle of harmony, so varying types of mental modes arising in a certain order imply determinate actions in previous births.²³ Moreover, the novel experiences in dream or hallucination, which can by no way be related to anything known in the present birth unmistakably point to previous births.²⁴ Indeed just as the present indicates the past and the future, so the present birth suggests previous births and those that are still

¹⁸ *sattvaika-niṣṭhe manasi bhagavat-pārśva-vartini.
tamaś candamasivedaṁ uparajyā'vabhāṣate..* 4.29.69

¹⁹ *tāvaṁ ayaṁ vyavahāraḥ sadā'viḥ
kṣetra-jña-sākṣyo bhavati sthūla-sūkṣmaḥ.
tasmād mano liṅgaṁ ado vadanti
guṇā'guṇatvasya parā'varasya..* 5.11.7

²⁰ *pañcabhiḥ kurute svārthān pañca vedā'tha pañcabhiḥ.
ekas tu ṣoḍaśena trin svayaṁ sapta-daśo'snute..* 6.1.50
vide also 6.15.25

²¹ *jayānam imam utsjya śvasantaṁ puruṣo yathā.
karmā'tmanyāhitaṁ bhukte tāḍṣenetareṇa vā..* 4.29.61

²² *yenaivā'rabhate karma tenaivā'mutra tat pumān.
bhukte hyavyavadhānena liṅgena manasā svayaṁ..* 4.29.60

²³ *yathā'numiyate cittam ubhayair indriyehitaiḥ.
evaṁ prāg-deha-jam karma lakṣyate citta-vṛttibhiḥ..* 4.29.63

²⁴ *nā'nubhūtaṁ kva cā'nena dehenā'dṛṣṭam a-śrutam.
kadācid upalabhyeta yad-rūpaṁ yadyg ātmani..
tenā'sya tāḍṣam rājan liṅgino deha-sambhavam.
śraddadhatvā'nanubhūto'rtho na manaḥ spraṣṭum arhati..* 4.29.64-65

ahead.²⁵ Empirical experience, confined to the objects of the present birth, is too feeble to penetrate through the veil of the present to the past and the future.²⁶ The limitation of cognition should not therefore be construed as the negation of previous and future births. As fire dormant in wood suddenly bursts into conflagration, so some specific action attains maturity immediately before death and determines the next birth.²⁷ With the rest of the stock of action the individual soul transmigrates. Like a leech it holds fast to the next body before it quits the present form.²⁸ Here the *Bhāgavata* is evidently drawing upon the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*.²⁹

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* in one of its oft-quoted passages declares³⁰ that when a man departs from one physical body to another, "*vidyā*" and "*karman*" pursue him. By the word "*vidyā*" the *Upaniṣad* understands "*śraddhā*" (spiritual faith) and "*satya*" (truth);³¹ and, a wise man is he who adheres to spiritual faith and truth. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* extends the meaning of the word "*vidyā*" by including "*pañcāgni-vidyā*" and "*Hiraṇya-garbha-upāsana*"³² in its fold. "*Karman*", in this context of transmigration means, according

²⁵ *mana eva manuṣyasya pūrva-rūpāṇi śaṁsati.*

bhaviṣyataś ca bhadraṁ te tathaiva na bhaviṣyataḥ.. 4.29.66

vide also 6.1.47

²⁶ *yathā'jñas tamasā yukta upāste vyaktam eva hi.*

na veda pūrvam aparaṁ naṣṭa-janma-smṛtis tathā.. 6.1.49

²⁷ *agner yathā dāru-viyoga-yogayor*

adṛṣṭato'nyan na nimittam asti.

evam hi jantor api dur-vibhāvyaḥ

śarīra-saṁyoga-viyoga-ketuḥ.. 10.1.51

²⁸ *yathā tṛṇa-jalaukeyaṁ nā'payātyapayāti ca.*

na tyajen mriyamāṇo'pi prāg-dehā'bhimatim janaḥ.. 4.29.76

vide also 10.1.40

²⁹ *tad yathā tṛṇa-jayāyukā tṛṇasyā'ntaṁ gatvā'nyam ākramam ākramya*
ātmānam upasaṁharatyevam evā'yam ātmedaṁ śarīraṁ nihatyā'
vidyāṁ gamayitvā'nyam ākramam ākrmyā'tmānam upasaṁharati

BU 4.4.3

³⁰ *taṁ vidyā-karmaṇi samanvārabhete* BU 4.4.2

³¹ *ye cā'mi aranye śraddhāṁ satyam upāsate* BU 6.2.15

³² Commenting on Ch U 5.10.1-2 Śaṅkara remarks that people eligible for "*deva-yāna*" (the path of gods) may be householders or recluses. The former must be the knowers of "*pañcāgni-vidyā*" and the latter must have taken to the worship (*upāsana*) of *Hiraṇya-garbha* (*satya*): *Pañcāgni-vido gṛhasthāḥ ; .. vāna-prasthāḥ parivrā-jakāś ca satyam brahma hiraṇya-garbhā'khyam upāsate...*

to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, “*yajña*” (sacrifice), “*dāna*” (gift) and “*tapas*” (religious austerity which perhaps includes here any act of religious merit).³³ By the word, “*karman*” the *Chāndogya* understands “*iṣṭa*” (sacrifice), *datta* (gift) and “*pūrta*” (social welfare). It thus appears that according to both the *Upaniṣads*, two of the earliest of their kind, “*karman*” came to be conceived under two well-defined categories—*Vedic* and secular or quasi-religious deeds. They could therefore be conveniently called “*iṣṭa*” and “*pūrta*” respectively. In fact the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* has used the collective term “*iṣṭāpūrta*” to cover all types of action. The *Bhāgavata* uses the word “*pravṛtta*” to cover the cases of both the *Vedic* and secular actions envisaged by the *Chāndogya*. The usage of the term “*pravṛtta*” is based on the common denominator of both the types of actions, viz, the presence of a selfish motive to be realised here or hereafter. On the other hand, “*vidyā*” (elaborated in the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*) and *Hiraṇya-garbha-upāsanā* was replaced by the term “*brahma-vidyā*” meaning *Upaniṣadic* knowledge. The *Bhāgavata* uses the word “*nivṛtta*” to mean such knowledge (marked by the absence of selfish motive),³⁴ consisting in “*vidyā*” “*tapas*” and “*yoga-samādhi*”.³⁵

Although the *Bhāgavata* has classified action along traditional lines, yet it rises subsequently to the high altitude of the supreme spiritual act: If man has to abide by the directions of the *Vedas* let him do so. Let him perform according to his capacity the duties enjoined. He is allowed to perform any of them—*nitya* or *naimittika* or *kāmya*. But, only with a profound sense of surrendering the fruits of his action, let him proceed to his duties. In this supreme act of surrender both *pravṛtta* and *nivṛtta* actions are converted into the unity of spiritual worship of God. The *Bhāgavata* calls this “*kriyā'dvaita*” i.e., the spiritual act that discards the duality of *pravṛtta* and *nivṛtta* actions. Supported by the other two monisms, namely, “*bhāvā'dvaita*” (i.e., the vision of the Ultimate Background

³³ *atha ye yajñena dānena tapasā lokān jayanti te dhūmam abhisambhanti* BU 6.2.16

³⁴ *pravṛttañ ca nivṛttañ ca dvividhaṁ karma vaidikam. āvartate pravṛttena nivṛttenā'īnute'mṛtam..* 7.15.47

³⁵ *na karmabhis tām gatim āpnuvanti vidyā-tapo-yoga-samādhi-bhājām.* 2.2.23cd

with appearances of objectivity), and "*dravyā'dvaita*" (i.e., all-embracing altruism which breaks through the dichotomy between "I" and "Mine" on the one hand and the rest of the world on the other), "*krityā'dvaita*" ensures final release of the labouring soul after the present gross body has fallen off (*sadyomukti*). The soul is then awakened to its pristine glory when the three dreams viz, the difference of cause and effect (the world of plurality), difference between one action and another, and the difference between the selfish world and the world of God, are warded off.⁸⁶

A person may attain this highest knowledge on the earth ; and, out of supreme detachment he may court disembodied release just after death. Or, maybe such a person may possess the curiosity of tasting divine pleasures and may accordingly defer release for some time. Or, maybe he possesses knowledge of a high degree which requires further refinement before he can attain salvation. Or, perhaps he is absolutely given to action but then after the attainment of heavenly pleasures he is suddenly awakened to spirituality. But if the worse comes to the worst, he may not attain knowledge and after heavenly pleasures falls back upon the earth to begin his religious career once again. Or, he may do no moral or immoral action but just performs the secular deeds required for his subsistence. Or,—and this is the last alternative—he may turn into a devil and commit all sorts of sins.

Of these possibilities, the possessor of the highest knowledge attended with supreme detachment does not transmigrate at all. As indicated above, immediately after his gross body has gone he attains final beatitude. At the other extreme, the devil has to enter any or all of the twentyone or twentyeight types of hell as retributive measures.⁸⁷ The performer of secular acts

⁸⁶ *syāt sādṛṣya-bhramas tāvad vikalpe sati vastunah.
jāgrat-svāpau yathā svapne tathā vidhi-niṣedhatā..
bhāvā'dvaitam kriyā'dvaitam dravyā'dvaitam tathā'tmanah.
vartayan svā'nubhūtyeha trīn svapnān dhunute munih..
kārya-kāraṇa-vastuāikyā-darśanam paśa-tantu-vat.
a-vastutvād vikalpasya bhāvā'dvaitam tad ucyate..
yad brahmaṇi pare sāksāt sarva-karma-samarpaṇam.
mano-vāk-tanubhiḥ pārtha kriyā'dvaitam tad ucyate..
ātma-jāyā-sutā'dinām anyeṣāṃ sarva-dehinām.
yat svārtha-kāmayor āikyam dravyā'dvaitam tad ucyate.. 7.15.61-65*

⁸⁷ Description of different types of hell: 3.30.19-34, 5.26.7

will undergo on the earth the cycles of births (not necessarily human) and deaths. Even a secular act has an admixture of merit or demerit or both and that determines his succeeding birth or births.³⁸ For the rest is prescribed either the path of the Fathers (*pitṛ-yāna*, also called *dakṣiṇa-mārga*) or the path of the Gods (*deva-yāna* or *uttara-mārga*). Those who are addicted to *kāmya* (or *pravṛtta karman*) go to *pitṛ-yāna* while those pursuing *nitya* and *naimittika* (i.e., *nivṛtta karman*) proceed to *deva-yāna*.³⁹ Of the two paths, *pitṛ-yāna* is confined to the three worlds, *Bhū*, *Bhuva* and *Svar*.⁴⁰ It is also liable to a number of limitations. In the first place, people travelling by this way are to return, as a rule, to material existence.⁴¹ Secondly, all the three worlds are dissolved at the time of *naimittika-pralaya*.⁴² Thirdly, as these worlds as well as the physical body—the instrument of enjoyment—are transitory and as the sense-organs fare no better, happiness derived from these is no good⁴³ for it is bound to end in great disappointment and frustration.⁴⁴ *Deva-yāna*, then, is the only way worth-having. Broadly speaking, by *karman* one goes to *pitṛ-loka*, the abode of Fathers; and, by *vidyā* one secures *deva-loka*, the abode of Gods.

Reference to the two paths is found as early as the *Rg-*

³⁸ *kulaḥ kulaḥ miśraḥ karmaṇāṃ gatayas tvimāḥ. satvaṃ rajas tama iti tisraḥ sūra-ny-nārakāḥ. tatra pyekaikaśo rājan bhidyante gatayas tridhā..* 2.10.40cd, 41

³⁹ *pravṛttaṃ ca nivṛttaṃ ca śāstraṃ pāñcāla-samjñitam. pitṛ-yānaṃ deva-yānaṃ śrotṛac chruta-dharād vrajat..* 4.29.13

⁴⁰ *yogesvarāṇāṃ gatim āhur antar-bahis tri-lokyāḥ pavana'ntarātmanāṃ. na karmabhis tām gatim āpnuvanti* 2.2.23abc

⁴¹ *traivargikāḥ te puruṣā vimukhā hari-medhasaḥ. dakṣiṇena pathā'ryamnaḥ pitṛ-lokaṃ vrajanti te. tatas te kṣiṇa-sukṛtāḥ punar lokam imaṃ prati. patanti vivaḍā devaiḥ sadyo-vibhramśitodayāḥ..* 3.32.18ab, 20ab, 21

⁴² *yadā cā'hindra-śayyāyām śete'nantā'sano hariḥ. tadā lokā layaṃ yānti ta ete gṛha-medhinām..* 3.32.4

⁴³ *yadartha iha karmāṇi vidvanmānyasakṛn naraḥ. karotyato viparyāsam a-moghaṃ vindate phalam.. nirūpyatām iha svārthaḥ kiyān deha-bhṛto'surāḥ. niṣekā'diṣṭavasthāsu klīyamānasya karmabhiḥ..* 7.7.41-46

⁴⁴ *kleśa-bhūryalpa-sārāṇi karmāṇi vi-phalāni vā.* 8.5.47ab

Veda.⁴⁵ This suggests the antiquity of the two concepts. In spite of the all-absorbing interest in rituals during the *Brāhmaṇa*-period, speculations started as to the existence of the path of Gods beyond that of the Fathers⁴⁶ and the *Śatapatha* indulges in some details of the path of Gods.⁴⁷ Among the earliest *Upaniṣads*, both the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya* offer further details of the two paths together with the path of descent in the case of *pitṛ-yāna*.⁴⁸ While the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya* lay emphasis on the description up to *Soma-loka*—the common resting place of both the Gods and the Fathers—the *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad* concerns itself primarily with the description of the path of Gods beyond *Soma-loka* which it calls the door of heaven.⁴⁹ Lastly, the *Brahma-sūtra* attempts to systematise the loose threads into unity of thought although this meant adding new interpretation to the old concept. Ignoring minor details the outline of the two paths may be sketched as on page 271.

The conception of the two paths is one of the finest specimens of the evolution of thoughts from the *Ṛg-Veda* to the *Upaniṣads*. The *Ṛg-Veda* declares that “*dharma*” in its earliest form meant “*yajña*” (sacrifice).^{49a} In its simplest form “*yajña*” means the offering of a gift on fire in favour of a god, and, as the daily oblation on fire by a householder conforms to this simple form of “*yajña*”, *dharma* appears to have begun its career from the modest performance of daily oblation, called *Agni-hotra*. *Cāturmāsya* was akin to *Agni-hotra* with the difference that while *Agni-hotra* was to be performed everyday, *Cāturmāsya* required performance on the full-moon day of every four months. *Agni-hotra* and *Cāturmāsya* appear to have had many things in common varying mainly in point of the time of performance. Looked at from this point of view *Cāturmāsya* might be regarded as an extension of *Agni-hotra*. But

⁴⁵ *eha yātām pathibhir deva-yānāiḥ* RV 3.58.5

pra me panthā deva-yānā adyāsan RV 7.76.2

panthānam anu praviḍvān pitṛ-yānam RV 10.2.7

⁴⁶ JB 1.17.18, 42, 44, 49-50

⁴⁷ SB 2.5.5.8-9

⁴⁸ BU 6.2.15-16 ; ChU 5.10.2, 4, 5, 4.15.5, 5.10.2

⁴⁹ *etad vai svargasya lokasya dvāraṁ yac candramāḥ* KauU 1.2

^{49a} *yajñena yajñam ayajanta devās tāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan*
RV 10.90.16

THE TWO PATHS

THE PATH OF GODS

*(deva-yāna)**Ascent*

THE PATH OF FATHERS

*(pitṛ-yāna)**Ascent**Descent*Viṣṇu-loka *(parama-pada)*

Brahmā-loka

Indra-loka

Varuṇa-loka

Agni-loka

*(deva-loka)*Soma-loka *(svarga-dvāra)*

Sūrya

.....

.....

.....

saṁvatsara

uttara-ayana

śukla-pakṣa

ahan

arcis

↑

.....

ākāśa

vāyu

pitṛ-loka

.....

dakṣiṇa-ayana

kṛṣṇa-pakṣa

rātri

dhūma

↑

→ ākāśa

↓
vāyu

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

dhūma

abhra

megha

vṛṣṭi

vṛhi-yava

retas

punar-janman

such simple form of "yajña" was soon institutionalised. It gradually became a detailed affair with at least four priests to manage it. In other words, "yāga" developed into "īṣṭi", requiring now the services of four priests.⁵⁰ The *Hotṛ* or invoker recites the verses to invite and praise the gods; the *Udgātṛ* or singer chants the *Sāman*; the *Adhvaryu* or executor performs all sacrificial acts while the *Brahman* or high priest maintains overall superintendence. From the practical point of view the *Adhvaryu* was the most important figure. The *Adhvaryu* sought the technical guidance from the *Yajur-Veda* in which the requisite *mantras* from the *Rg-Veda* were arranged in the order they are to be used at the sacrifice. The treatment of the topics in the *Vājasaneyi-Samhitā* (i.e., the collection of the *Śukla-Yajur-Veda*) suggests⁵¹ the classification of the sacrifices as it also indicates their relative prominence. The *Samhitā* treats *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*, *Agni-hotra*, *Cātur-māsyā*, *Soma* and *Paśu* sacrifices one after the other. The *Bhāgavata* has adopted the same classification of sacrifices (*īṣṭa*).⁵² The *Śatapatha-Bṛāhmaṇa*, the commentary on the *Śukla-Yajur-Veda*, and the most important of all the *Bṛāhmaṇas*, maintains the supremacy of *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* and gradually the other types of sacrifices began to be regarded as its mere variations (*vikṛti*). This position is duly noticed by *Āśvalāyana* who observes that all *īṣṭis*, sacrifices in which an animal is offered and those in which *soma* is offered are explained by the *Pūrṇamāsa īṣṭi*.⁵³ All these lead to the conclusion that by the time of the *Śrauta-sūtras*, *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* represented all institutional sacrifices performed with *havis*, *soma* or *paśu*.

But the era of sacrifice was gradually replaced by a different kind of thinking. Already in the *Āraṇyakas* the shifting of emphasis from physical act to contemplation was noticeable but the process reached its climax in the *Upaniṣads*. The spirit of the *Upaniṣads* possessed as much of reaction as of assimilation. The *Upaniṣads* asserted the superiority of knowledge (*vidyā*),

⁵⁰ Kane explains "īṣṭi" as follows:—"An *īṣṭi* means a sacrifice in which the sacrificer employs four priests" HDS Vol II Part II p. 1009

⁵¹ VS Books 1-8

⁵² *darśaś ca pūrṇa-māsaś ca cātur-māsyam paśuḥ sutaḥ. etad īṣṭam pravṛttaḥkhyam* 7.15.48cd, 49a

⁵³ HDS Vol. II Part II p 1009

a new kind of *dharma*, to the conventional *dharma* so far confined to the meticulous performance of *Vedic* rituals. But soon the process of adjustment began. *Vedic dharma* of ritualism found a new name in "*Karman*" and the symbolic transformation of the physical acts (e.g., horse-sacrifice) which had already begun in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, the earliest and the direct descendant of the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, overhauled the earlier thoughts centred round *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* and the result was the new emphasis upon the two paths—the path of Gods and the path of Fathers. This emphasis accommodated both knowledge (*vidyā*) and *dharma* consisting in *Vedic* ritualism (*karman*). While the householders performed *karman*, the *vānaprasthins* and the recluses resorted to *vidyā*, as a rule.

The *Rg-Vedic* passage "*apāma somaṃ amṛtā abhūma*" (We shall drink *soma* and be immortal.)⁵⁴ inspired the priests to perform sacrifice for the sake of immortality; and, as this immortality was linked up with *soma* such immortality was taken to be the privilege of a person who could secure the abode of the moon; for, *soma* was understood to mean the moon. Thus the ideal of sacrifice was the attainment of the moon (*candra-loka*). Now, sacrifices in general were, as indicated above, *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*, at their core. *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* was to be performed either for life or for thirty years till one becomes old, or, according to the *Dākṣāyaṇa* tradition recorded in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*,⁵⁵ everyday for a year. The *Dākṣāyaṇa* tradition seems to have directly influenced the conception of the two paths under consideration. Although, as the names suggest, *Pūrṇamāsa* sacrifice and *Darśa* sacrifice should be expected to be performed on the full-moon day and the new-moon day respectively yet in practice the principal function of offering the oblation on fire would come the next day i.e., on the first day of the dark half in the case of *Pūrṇamāsa* and on the first day of the bright half of the case of *Darśa*. This implies that the full-moon days, like the new-moon days, did not receive any offering. This vacuum is partially relieved by the *īṣṭi* called *Cātur-māsya*, a part of the *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*. *Cātur-māsya* constitutes three rites, *Vaiśvadeva*, *Varuṇa-praghāsa* and

⁵⁴ RV 8.48.3

⁵⁵ SB 2.4.4.1-6

Sāka-medha. On the full-moon day of *Caitra* an offering of cooked food is made to all gods (*Vaiśvadeva*). Four months later, on the full-moon day of *Śrāvaṇa* offering is made to *Varuṇa* (*Varuṇa-praghāsa*) and still four months later, on the full-moon day of *Mārgaśīrṣa* an offering is made to *Indra*. Just as *Cātur-māsya* would converge with *Pūrṇamāsa* so *Piṇḍ-ṭīṭṭr-yajña* in which offerings were made on the *dakṣiṇa* agni in favour of Fathers, was a part of *Darśa*.⁵⁶

So, according to the *Dākṣāyaṇa* tradition, when once started on the first day of the dark half, *Pūrṇamāsa* would continue everyday till a day before *Amāvasyā* is reached. Then there is rest for a day (i.e., the *Amāvasyā* day). From the first day of the bright half, *Pūrṇamāsa* is alternated by *Darśa*, which will continue in the same way as *Pūrṇamāsa*. So, the two fortnights (*śukla* and *kṛṣṇa*) are the alternating spans of *Darśa* and *Pūrṇamāsa*. The rites of *Darśa* and *Pūrṇamāsa* are to be repeated for a year (*samvatsara*) which, like the two halves of a month (*śukla* and *kṛṣṇa*), consists in two halves (*uttara-ayana* and *dakṣiṇa-ayana*), marked by the change of the position of the moving earth in relation to the sun. As *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* had started from the first day of the dark half of the month, it will finish its yearly course on the eve of the full-moon day. Hence on that finishing day *Pūrṇamāsa* only will be performed and no *Darśa*.

At the middle of the altar, *gārhapatya* agni is established. To the east of it *āhavanīya* agni is instituted while at the south-east from the *gārhapatya* is the place for *dakṣiṇa*. In relation to *dakṣiṇa*, then, *āhavanīya* lies at the north. While offering to the gods is generally done on *āhavanīya*, the same to the Fathers is done on *dakṣiṇa*. In *Pūrṇamāsa*, offering is done especially to *Agni*, *Soma* and *Prajāpati*; in *Darśa*, on the other hand, besides the same gods, *Indra* is also propitiated. But *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* is not concerned with these gods only. All the gods and Fathers are greeted and fed.⁵⁷

Two parallel rites viz, *Pūrṇamāsa* and *Darśa* were taken by the *Upaniṣadic* thinkers to suggest the two paths, referred

⁵⁶ KSS 4.1.

⁵⁷ The materials utilised for the exposition of *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* sacrifice are culled from Keith's RPVU and Kane's HDS

to in the *Rg-Veda*. Agni was the starting point of both in that oblation on fire was the means of attaining both of them. But as the path of Gods ensured release it was taken to be the path of light and was naturally associated with the full-moon sacrifice. On the other hand, the path of Fathers was considered to be transitory and suggested return to this earth after the merits are well-nigh exhausted. Eternity by action was thus a relative status. Real eternity was obtainable by knowledge only as propounded by the *Upaniṣads*. So the path of Fathers became associated with darkness and so with *Darśa*. As flame and smoke are related to fire and as flame offers light and smoke gives darkness, so the path of the Gods and the path of Fathers were described as the path of flame (*arcir-mārga*) and the path of smoke (*dhūma-mārga*) or simply, as the white (*śukla*) and the black (*kṛṣṇa*) paths respectively. Association of *Pūrṇamāsa* with *āhavanīya*, the northern fire, and of *Darśa* with *dakṣiṇa*, the southern fire, originated the names *Uttara-mārga* and *Dakṣiṇa-mārga*. As the yearly course of the *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*, according to the *Dākṣāyaṇa* tradition, ended with *Pūrṇamāsa*, so on the path of the Gods fell *saṁvatsara* but it is wanting in the case of the path of Fathers. *Samvatsara*, as we have already seen in the context of Time,⁵⁸ is closely associated with the sun, and so, the path of Gods lies through the sun. Thus, through the sun the path of Gods leads to the first abode of pleasure, *Soma-loka*, the most coveted region of what the path of Fathers extolled as immortality. In the path of Fathers, the *Chāndogya* takes *pitṛ-loka* after *dakṣiṇa-ayana*; then *vāyu*, then *ākāśa* and then *Soma-loka* are described to fall one after the other. Mention of *vāyu* and *ākāśa* suggests that *Soma-loka* falls within the three worlds though it may be the limit of the latter. But *pitṛ-loka* and the *Soma-loka* are two different realities according to the *Chāndogya*. *Darśa-pūrṇamāsa* had provided for common feast both for Gods and Fathers. That provision is maintained in the conception of *Soma-loka* where, as the *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad* asserts at the very outset, both Gods and Fathers meet and have to meet. Persons given to *kāmya-karman* stay here for long long time, enjoy all sorts of pleasures

⁵⁸ vide Chapter XI p. 250

herein as long as the merits of their action continue to bear fruit; and, afterwards, with the residue of their merits they fall upon smoke that forms a part of the cloud. Encased in the subtle body and fortunately unconscious, the descending souls thus enter shower that may grow crops. Such crops may be consumed by a male and so the soul may reside in his semen; and, if the man marries and both of them are fertile, such semen may give rise to rebirth. But every stage is endangered by precarious chance including the possibility of a stillborn baby.⁵⁹

In the scheme of *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* the sacrificial fire is obviously important. The physical fire was thought to be the earthly existence of the fire in heaven (*deva-loka*). Beside the god of fire, Varuṇa and Indra still enjoyed great prominence which was their privilege in the *Ṛg-Veda*. But, above all, stood Prajāpati; and *Ṛg-Vedic* Hiranya-garbha was sometimes thought to be above Prajāpati while other times identical with him. The *Kauṣītaki* takes them to be two persons⁶⁰ but later on both were amalgamated into the concept Brahmā, the creator of the three worlds. As early as the *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa*⁶¹ Agni, Indra, and Varuṇa were possessors of divine abodes and a person could enjoy their company. But beyond those abodes lay the highest region (*paramam sthānam*), the supreme goal (*paramā gatiḥ*). This description was taken to mean, as for example, by the *Kauṣītaki*, that *Agni-loka*, *Varuṇa-loka*, *Indra-loka* and lastly *Brahmā-loka* were hierarchical planes. In later literature these four regions seem to have been recognised under the names, *Mahas*, *Jana*, *Tapas* and *Satya lokas* respectively. These four abodes constitute the abodes of Gods (*deva-loka*).

In the scheme of *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*, Viṣṇu's position was unassailable. The *Śatapatha* frequently identifies him with sacrifice.⁶² In the *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*, the model of all sacri-

⁵⁹ *abhrām bhūtvā megho bhavati, megho bhūtvā pravarṣati, tā iha vrihi-yavā, jāyante'to vai khalu dur-niṣprapataram yo yo hyannam atti, yo retaḥ siñcati, tad bhūya eva bhavati.* ChU 5.10.6; vide also Śaṅkara on this.

⁶⁰ *āgacchati.. sa prajāpati-lokam sa brahma-lokam* KauU 1.3

⁶¹ SB 2.5.5.8-9

⁶² e.g., SB 1.1.2.13

fices, it is no wonder that Viṣṇu with his three strides will overshadow the entire process including the result of this sacrifice, viz, *Soma-loka* which formed only a part of Viṣṇu's body. But Viṣṇu had transcendental existence, the highest abode (*parama pada*) as the *Ṛg-Veda* tells us.⁶³ So, transcending the world of pragmatic existence, one soars to that highest existence which, even according to Śaṅkara, is *Viṣṇu-loka*.⁶⁴

Against this wider perspective the contributions of the *Bhāgavata* deserve consideration at this stage. Firstly, the *Bhāgavata* has elaborated the concept of the three worlds by incorporating in their fold "*śiṣu-māra-cakra*" consisting in a host of planets from the sun to the pole star (*dhruva*).⁶⁵ Beyond "*śiṣu-māra-cakra*" which is also called "*viṣṇu-cakra*" lies *mahar-loka*.⁶⁶ Below the earth, again, are seven lower regions one after the other, *Atala*, *Vitala*, *Sutala*, *Talātala*, *Mahātala*, *Rasātala* and *Pātāla*, inhabited by gods, demons, snakes and so on.⁶⁷ Apparently the elaboration of the higher regions as well as the lower came in to accommodate the different kinds of creation mentioned in the context of Time.⁶⁸ Secondly, according to the *Bhāgavata*, *Dakṣiṇa-ayana* falls as much within the purview of the sun as the *Uttara-ayana* does and the description of the two paths as the solar path and the lunar path is just an attempt to draw an artificial line between the two. So, even to the path of Fathers belongs the sun.⁶⁹ Thirdly, the distinction drawn by the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* between the *pitṛ-loka* and the *Soma-loka* is somewhat artificial; if, *Soma-loka* is the goal of the

⁶³ RV 1.154.5

⁶⁴ Śaṅkara on BS 4.3.10 comments:—*kāya-brahma-loka-pralaya-pratyupasthāpane sati tattraivotpanna-samyag-darśanāḥ santaḥ tad-adhyakṣeṇa hiraṇya-garbhena saha ataḥ paramaṁ parissuddham viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam pratipadyante iti.*

⁶⁵ 5.23.4-9; Śrīdhara briefly describes this "*cakra*" as "*sūryam ārabhya dhruvāntam sanniveśam*" etc. The *Bhāgavata* takes this wheel to be the axle of the three worlds (*viśva-nābhi* 2.2.25).

⁶⁶ *tad viśva-nābhiṁ tvatīvaritṭya viṣṇor aṇīyasā virajenā'tmanaiḥ namaskṛtaṁ brahma-vidāṁ upaiti kalpā'yuso yad vibudhā ramante..* 2.2.25

⁶⁷ *avaner api adhaṣṭāt sapta bhū-vivarā ekaikaśo yojanā'yutā'natareṇa āyāma-vistareṇa upakṣipāḥ:—atalam, vitalam, sutalam, talātalam, mahātalam, rasātalam, pātālam iti* 5.24.7

⁶⁸ vide Chapter XI pp. 248-49

⁶⁹ *dakṣiṇeṇa pathā'ryamnaḥ pitṛ-lokaṁ vrajanti te.* 3.32.20ab

path of Fathers, then *pitr-loka* has to be a kind of *Soma-loka*. So the *Bhāgavata* ignores the distinction between the two and affirms the presence of *Soma-loka* just after *Dakṣiṇa-ayana*.⁷⁰ It may be noted here that *Soma-loka* is the first region of enjoyment. All other names from *arcis* or *dhūma* down to *sūrya* do not indicate any region for, as we have seen, they all stand for the different marks of time through which *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* is to be performed. The *Brahma-sūtra* also saw through the illogicality of their recognition as different abodes and suggested⁷¹ that these names stood for living human souls which helped a transmigrating soul through either of these two paths (*ātivāhika-mānava*).

Fourthly, the actual boundary line between the two paths has always been an uncertainty. The *Rg-Veda* merely mentioned the two paths but did not lay down the line of demarcation. It is presumed by posterity that they were two paths and in the context of sacrifice the interpretation was that the path of Gods was meant for one who performed the daily duties like *Agni-hotra* and occasional duties like *Cātur-māsya* and that the path of the Fathers was the destiny of one who performed a sacrifice like *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa* with an empirical end in view. As daily and occasional duties were believed to rouse knowledge the two paths became the path of knowledge and the path of action (selfish action) respectively. The *Chāndogya* saw through the artificial division of the two paths and so affirmed that both the paths led to *Soma-loka* and this was taken for granted by the *Kauṣītaki*. The *Kauṣītaki* further claimed that even a person who is present at *Soma-loka* through the path of Fathers can further proceed to *Satya-loka*, the abode of Brahṁā, if he can in the meantime acquire knowledge. The *Brahma-sūtra* accepts this position of the *Kauṣītaki* with the proviso that the *upāsana* for the purpose must be other than "*pratīkopāsana*" (idol worship).⁷² Śaṅkara vacillates to accept the view of this *sūtra*

⁷⁰ *dravya-sūkṣma-vipākāt ca dhūmo rātrir apakṣayaḥ.
ayanam dakṣiṇam somo darśa oṣadhi-virudhaḥ..
annaṁ reta iti kṛmeṣa pitṛ-yānam punar-bhavaḥ.
ekaikaśyenā'nupūrvyā bhūtvā bhūtvēha jāyate..* 7.15.50-51

⁷¹ *ātivāhikāś tal-līngāt* BS 4.3.4

⁷² *a-pratīkāś-lambanān nayatīti bādarāyaṇaḥ* BS 4.3.15

in face of the express statement of the *Chândogya*⁷³ that *all* go to *Brahma-loka*. Vācaspati, the illustrious commentator on Śaṅkara, suggests an escape in that *all* go to *Brahma-loka* but with the difference that a person with *pratīkopāsanā* goes there unattended while others are led the way by an unearthly person (*amānavaḥ puruṣa*—an angel).⁷⁴ The *Bhāgavata* envisages three types of persons in the *Satya-loka*: (i) those who are there by the selfless performance of daily (*nitya*) and occasional (*nai-mittika*) actions, (ii) those who have practised *Hiraṇya-garbha-upāsanā*, a specific type of *vidyā* prescribed by the *Chândogya*, and (iii) those who are the worshippers of *Bhagavān* (Viṣṇu). According to Śaṅkara *all* persons enter *Viṣṇu-loka* together with *Brahmā* at the end of *Brahmā*'s life. The *Bhāgavata* is quite unambiguous on this issue. According to the *Bhāgavata* the only criterion to be applicable to *all* the three categories, mentioned above, is whether one has been able to obtain the highest enlightenment—the knowledge of identity between the individual soul and *Brahman*. The performers of daily and occasional actions without selfish motive will therefore have to return to this earth if they do not qualify themselves while they are in *Satya-loka* by the achievement of the knowledge of identity.⁷⁵ Persons with *Hiraṇya-garbha-upāsanā* shall enjoy the pleasures available at *Satya-loka* and then merge in the essence of Viṣṇu at the end of *dvi-parā'rdha*, the life of *Brahmā*. They enjoy this privilege in the company of *Brahmā*.⁷⁶ The

⁷³ *tat puruṣo'mānavaḥ; sa enān brahma gamayati* ChU 4.15.5

⁷⁴ Śaṅkara's vacillation is reflected in the following:—*nanu a-brahma-kratur api brahma gacchatīti śrūyate, yathā pañcāgni-vidyāyām—sa enān brahma gamayati—iti? bhavatu, yatra evam āhatya-vāda upalabhyate; tad-abhāve tvatsargikeṣa tat-kratu-nyāyena brahma-kratūnām eva tat-prāptir netareṣām iti gamayati*—Śaṅkara on 4.3.15. Vācaspati makes the following remarks on Śaṅkara:—*tasmāt pratikā' lambanān viduṣo varjayitvā sarvān vikārā'lambanān nayati amānavo brahma-lokam*.

⁷⁵ *bheda-dṛṣṭyā'bhimānena niḥ-saṅgenā'pi karmaṇā. kartṛtvāt sa-guṇam brahma puruṣam puruṣarabham.. sa saṁsṛtya punaḥ kāle kālenelvara-mūrtinā. jāte guṇa-vyatikare yathā-pūrvam prajāyate.. aīsvaryam pārameṣṭhyam ca te'pi karma-vinirmītam. niḥsvaya punar āyānti guṇa-vyatikare sati..* 3.32.13-15

⁷⁶ *evam paretya bhagavantam anupraviṣṭā ye yogino jīta-marun-manaso virāgāḥ. tenaiva sākam amṛtām puruṣam purāṇam brahma pradhānam upayāntyagatā'bhimānāḥ..* 3.32.10

worshippers of *Bhagavān* enjoy the pleasures of *Satya-loka* as long as they wish and they merge, whenever they grow disinterested, into the essence of *Bhagavān*.⁷⁷ Fifthly, the *Bhāgavata* discards the artificial distinction of actions into *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya*; what really matters to determine the quality of action is the *motive*. So even the *nitya-karmans* become as bad as the *kāmya* if they are done with impure mind or with a motive in view. A *nitya-karman* with a motive makes for the path of Fathers and not for the path of Gods as one might ordinarily expect.⁷⁸

Sixthly, the *Brahma-sūtra* prescribes either of the two paths for *all* including those who are transmigrating merely for rebirth.⁷⁹ The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*⁸⁰ describes the general process of transmigration like this: "*asya saumya puruṣasya prayato vāṇi manasi sampadyate, manaḥ prāṇe, prāṇas tejasi, tejaḥ parasyām devatāyām*". Śaṅkara explains this passage to mean: A dying man first loses the activity of his action organs. For instance, he loses the power of speech. Then he loses the power of sense organs. His organ of sight can no longer identify a figure, for instance. But still he is internally conscious. That shows that his mind is still active. Gradually the mind is lulled into inactivity. Still his breath is operative. When breath ceases followed by spasmodic revulsion of his hands and feet, his relatives feel his body and hope for his survival if they find it warm. Gradually warmth fades away and then people say that he has gone to God. The *Bhāgavata*, as interpreted by Śrīdhara, remodels this process in the light of *Yogic* mysticism and appropriates it as a preparation for entering the path of gods only. Thus it says that the organs merge in mind, mind in speech, speech in speech-sounds, they in *om*,

⁷⁷ *vāsudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ.
janayatyāśu vairāgyaṁ jñānaṁ yad brahma-darśanam..
yadā'sya cittaṁ artheṣu sameśvindriya-vṛttibhiḥ.
na vigṛhṇāti vaiśamaṁ priyaṁ a-priyaṁ ityuta..
sa tadāivā'tmanā'tmānaṁ nīḥ-saṅgaṁ sama-darśanam.
heyopādeya-rahitaṁ ārūḍhaṁ padam iṣate..* 3.32.23-25

⁷⁸ *ye tuihā'sakta-manasaḥ karmasu braddhaya'nvitāḥ.
kurvantyapratīṣiddhāni nityānyapi ca kṛtsnataḥ..
rajasā kuṇṭha-manasaḥ kāmā'tmāno'jīten-driyāḥ.
dakṣiṇena pathā'ryamnaḥ pūr-lokaṁ vrajanti te..* 3.32.16, 17ab, 20ab

⁷⁹ *samānā cā'sṛtyapakramād amṛtatvaṁ cā'nuṣṇya* BS 4.2.7

⁸⁰ Ch U 6.8.6

om in bindu, bindu in nāda, nāda in prāṇa and lastly prāṇa in the cosmic soul.⁸¹

Seventhly, the *Bhāgavata* describes the process of merging in Viṣṇu after residence at *Satya-loka*. The individual soul becomes "viśva", "taijasa", "prājñā" one after the other and finally becomes the transcendental reality (*turīya*).⁸² In another context⁸³ the *Bhāgavata* describes how the fourteen worlds including *Satya-loka* are reduced to the five elements and how in the reverse order the elements and the *Sāṃkhya* categories all merge into *Avyakta* and then *Avyakta* merges into the cosmic soul. If degrees of enlightenment be adopted to mark the stages of progressive journey in the path of gods, then we might say that the individual soul as it proceeds farther than *Satya-loka* first becomes "viśva" when it realises its identity with gross creation. In the same way realisation of identity with the subtle creation and that with *Avyakta*, the primordial matter, make the soul "taijasa" and "prājñā" respectively. Finally, it becomes "turīya" when it achieves the supreme identity with the cosmic soul (Viṣṇu). In this line of thinking the *Bhāgavata* has not only fused the *Sāṃkhya* categories in the context of the path of gods but has extended thereby the frontiers of the path of gods to the highest god, Viṣṇu. In this way the path of Fathers and the path of gods have found their highest fulfilment. Thus theology is transcended by sublime metaphysics.

This is, in brief, the *modus operandi* of the law of action. Its irresistibility and sovereign status sometimes seem to challenge the very existence of God.⁸⁴ But, if we remember that

⁸¹ indriyāṇi manasyūrmau vāci vaikārikam manah.
vācam varṇa-samāmnāye tam omkāre svare nyaset.
omkāram bindau nāde tam tan tu prāṇe mahatyamum.. 7.15.53

⁸² agniḥ sūryo divā prāhnaḥ suklo rākottaram sva-rūḥ.
viśvo'tha taijasaḥ prājñas turya ātmā samanvayāt.. 7.15.54

⁸³ 2.2.28-32

⁸⁴ nahi kramas ced iha mṛtyu-janmanoḥ
sarirīṇām astu tad ātma-karmabhiḥ.
yaḥ sneha-pāśo nija-sarga-vṛddhaye
svayam kṛtas te tam imam vivṛśasi.. 6.14.55 vide also 10.22.14-23

Karman is only a manifestation of God's potency⁸⁵ then God's position can be well appreciated. If *Soma*, the goal of action, is the king (*rājan*) as the *Chāndogya* declares, then *Brahmā* is the monarch (*saṃrāj*) of the three worlds (or rather fourteen worlds) and Viṣṇu, the cosmic soul, is then "*rāja-cakravartin*." *Karman* thus speaks of the glory of Viṣṇu, the cosmic soul.

⁸⁵ *tathā'pi tac-chakti-visarga eṣāṃ
sukhāya duḥkhāya hitā'hitāya
bandhāya mokṣāya ca mṛtyu-jānmanoh
śariripāṃ saṃśtaye'vakalpate.* 6.17.23

CHAPTER XIII

COSMOLOGY

Creation, as we have already noticed, is ultimately traced to Viṣṇu, the second grade of Reality. Before creation Viṣṇu was absorbed in transcendental trance (*yoga-nidrā*), reposed on His innate splendour of sequestered loneliness, absolutely free from the insistence of distracting forces. But this sense of divine loneliness (*Ramā*, *Viṣṇu-māyā* or *eko'ham*), marked by the absence of anything else to behold, made Him feel almost non-existent.¹ He therefore willed to be many (*Ātma-māyā* or *bahu syām*).² With this divine will to be many, Viṣṇu, the second grade of Reality, became *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality. Out of this divine will, the principle of heterogeneity, emerged *Māyā*, the principle of phenomenality, on the one hand, and *Cit-śakti*, the principle of divinity, on the other. These two mutually co-operative as well as contradictory potencies gave rise to *Puruṣa* (God) out of *Brahman*, the first grade of Reality. As the master of these two potencies, *Puruṣa* became the Lord of creation, when *Māyā* evolved into *Kāla* (time), *Svabhāva* (nature) and *Karman* (action) on the one hand, and, *Vidyā* (knowledge) *Avidyā* (ignorance) and *Prakṛti* or *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* (primordial matter) on the other. So, under the superintendence of *Puruṣa*, effected by *Cit-śakti*, creation started from *Prakṛti* by the joint operation of *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* thereon.³

According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, *Prakṛti* or primordial matter is *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* i.e., a potency that belongs to *Ātman* (God), serves to delude (*māyā*) *Jīva* and is constituted

¹ *sa vā eṣa tadā draṣṭā nā'palayad dṛśyam eka-rāṣ.*
menē'santam ivā'tmānaṁ supta-śaktir a-supta-dṛk.. 3.5.24

² *bhagavān eka āsedam agra ātmā'tmanāṁ vibhukḥ.*
ātmecchā'nugatāvātmā'nānā-matyupalakṣaṇaḥ.. 3.5.23

³ *kālāṁ karma svabhāvaṁ ca mayeśo māyayā svayā.*
ātman yadṛcchayā prāpataṁ vibubhūsur upādade.. 2.5.21

of the three *guṇas*. Such concept of *Prakṛti* is understandable if we remember that the *Bhāgavata* cosmology is derived from the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of the *Ṛg-Veda*. Creation is described in the *Sūkta* as the body of *Puruṣa* who thereby becomes immanent in creation although He has transcended it as well. Such is His majesty (*mahiman*) or power. So, creation is the demonstration of God's (*Puruṣa*) power. Being the body of God, the entire creation constitutes His psycho-physical organism. Creation therefore, according to the *Bhāgavata*, is both a physical (*adhibhūta*) and a personal (*adhyātma*) reality. If we consider God as the cosmic *Puruṣa* and the individual soul as the individual *puruṣa* then *adhibhūta* and *adhyātma* aspects of creation, correspond to the body of God and the body of the individual soul respectively. From this standpoint the physical creation (*adhibhūta*) which appears to be impersonal also becomes personal because such creation forms the body of God, the cosmic *Puruṣa*, in the same way as the individualistic creation (*adhyātma*) serves as the body of the individual soul (*puruṣa*). Again, as some of the categories of creation (up to the subtle elements, as we shall presently see) may legitimately claim to be the inner mechanism and as they evolve into the creation of gross elements that combine into perceptible gross bodies (individual as well as cosmic), such categories taken together are regarded as the subtle bodies, both individual and cosmic. The Classical *Sāṃkhya* of Īśvara-kṛṣṇa ignores the cosmic *Puruṣa*; and, so, torn off its proper mooring of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, his theory of creation drifts along the course of pure logic which, in due recognition of its inadequacy, ultimately surrenders to Scriptural texts (*tasmād api cā'siddham paroḥṣam āptāgamāt siddham*). Modern scholars like Prof. Seal and Woodroffe have tried to justify the order of creation as well as the creative process in the light of recent scientific investigations, as we shall see a little later.

Prakṛti, conceived as a potency, suggests that its constituent *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—are in their essence, nothing but powers. Of the three, *sattva* is taken to stand for illumination (*prakāśa*), *rajas* for activity (*kriyā*) and *tamas* for inertia (*varaṇa*) and weight (*gurutva*). So, the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—may be described as *jñāna-śakti* (the

power of knowledge), *kriyā-śakti* (the power of activity) and *dravya-śakti* (the power of inertia or solidity or mass) respectively. The evolutionary process moves on at every step by the interplay of these types of powers. The *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* states that the natural potencies of knowledge (*jñāna*), activity (*kriyā*) and physical strength (*bala*) belong to the Lord.⁴ The *Bhāgavata* seems to have construed this description to refer to *Prakṛti* consisting of three *guṇa*-powers.

The *Bhāgavata* has employed the doctrine of transformation (*pariṇāma-vāda*), typical of the *Sāṃkhya* system of thought, to explain the evolutionary process. This means that, according to the *Bhāgavata*, evolutionary creation is nothing but the manifestation or determination of a heterogeneous whole from the indeterminate and homogeneous whole. According to Prof. Seal the process of manifestation falls under three successive stages:—“(1) unequal aggregation with the storing up of energy in a certain collocation under the state of arrest, (2) a stimulus removing the arrest and disturbing the equilibrium, and (3) liberation of energy, moving on to a fresh collocation, fresh aggregation, arrest and equilibrium, and the result of that process is the development of a coherent determinate heterogeneous whole in what is essentially an incoherent, indeterminate, homogeneous whole”.⁵ The first step, as stated by Prof. Seal, explains the emergence of the three *guṇas* (*tri-guṇa*) in unequal aggregation from the indeterminate equilibrium i.e., *Prakṛti* or *Avyakta*. But as the first step also involves disturbance of the equilibrium it implies a stimulus which does it. From the *Bhāgavata* standpoint therefore the first and the second steps may be taken to point to a common stimulus that breaks the equilibrium. Then, there is liberation of energy moving on to a fresh collocation; and, finally, there develops a fresh collocation, fresh aggregation, arrest and equilibrium. According to the *Bhāgavata*, the process of evolution entails *Prakṛti* as the material cause; and, *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* operate on *Prakṛti* as efficient causes. *Kāla* breaks the equilibrium of the three *guṇas*, *Svabhāva* liberates the energy of the *guṇas* so long under the state of arrest, while

⁴ ŚU 6.8

⁵ Seal, p. 23

Karman solidifies the liberated energy into a specific category of creation.⁶ In brief, *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Kārman* account in succession for three well-defined processes of evolution from one category to another, viz, mass-disintegration, energy-transformation and condensation respectively. These three processes are repeated at every step as evolution proceeds from one category to another; and, then, from the creation of elements (*bhūtas*) to the elemental creation (*bhautika-sṛṣṭi*). Lastly, God is the agent cause of creation. His *Cit-śakti* maintains the overall supervision while the different cosmic agents from *Brahmā* downwards engage themselves in the different spheres of creation. So the *Bhāgavata*-creation presents not only the *adhibhūta* and the *adhyātma* aspects but *adhidaiva* as well.⁷ In other words creation may be viewed in terms of the evolution of a physical fact (*adhibhūta*), brought about by the operation of time etc. (*kāla-liṅga*=*vikṛti*) on primordial matter; as affecting the individual soul (*adhyātma*) such fact may also be looked upon as a distracting factor (*māyā-liṅga*=*vikṣepa*); but, it may, also be considered as a divine animation (*aṁśa-liṅga*=*cetanā*).⁸ Creation is thus a physical fact, a distracting force and, at the same time, a demonstration of spiritual unfoldment.

One more point deserves consideration here before we start the description of the order of creation. If creation is transformation like that of milk into curd, then how can *Prakṛti* maintain, as it does, a reality of its own, independent of its effects? Such a question suggests a variety of answers. One might say that, according to the doctrine of transformation, the effect is but the manifestation of the material cause itself. Or, one might say that *Prakṛti* being the inexhaustible source can never be completely transformed.⁹ As regards the trans-

⁶ *kālād guṇa-vyatikarāḥ pariṇāmaḥ svabhāvataḥ. karmaṇo janma mahataḥ puruṣādhiṣṭhitād abhūt...* 2.5.22

⁷ Śrīdhara on 3.26.21 comments:—

ayam arthaḥ:—adhibhūta-rūpeṇa tasyaiva mahān iti samjñā, adhyātma-rūpeṇa cittam iti, upāśya-rūpeṇa vāsudeva iti etc.

⁸ *so'pyaṁśa-guṇa-kālā'tmā bhagavad-dṛṣṭi-gocaraḥ. ātmānam vyākarod ātmā vīṭvāsyā'sya sīrṣṭayā...* 3.5.28

⁹ *na tasya kālā'vayavaiḥ pariṇāmā'dayo guṇāḥ. anādyanantam avyaktaṁ nityaṁ kāraṇam avyayam...* 12.4.19

formation of a limited evolute of *Prakṛti* into another evolute, *Prakṛti* perpetually feeds all its evolutes so that they also can maintain their individuality even when they are transformed into some other evolutes. Thus creation may proceed from one step to another by the joint operation of God, *Prakṛti*, *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* and the process of transformation is compatible with the maintenance of individual reality on the part of the evolutes of *Prakṛti* although the evolutionary process involves the transformation of such evolutes so that successive evolutes may be brought into existence.

The first evolute to emerge from the three *guṇas* by the combined operation of *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* is *Mahat*.¹⁰ As the first differentiation (*viśeṣa*) from the undifferentiated, (*nirviśeṣa*), *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā*, *Prakṛti* or *Avyakta*, it is described as the seed of the future universe.¹¹ As the first revelation through the cosmic gloom (i.e., the unmanifested or *avyakta*) it is recognised to have the preponderance of *sattva*.¹² *Mahat* is thus conceived as golden (*hiraṇmaya*)¹³ which by its lustre dispels cosmic darkness. In its *adhibhūta* or cosmic aspect presenting the physical universe, it is called *Mahat* (massive); in its *adhyātma* or the individualistic aspect bearing upon the empirical ego (*Jīvātman*) it acquires the designation of *Citta* (intellect); while, viewed as the manifestation of the spirit (*adhidaiva*) it is described as *Vāsudeva*.¹⁴ This last name (*Vāsudeva*) is employed to the first evolute in consideration of the fact that the spirit that reveals itself through this first evolute is marked by the predominantly *sāttvika* character of the evolute, which (character) the *Bhāgavata* calls *vasudeva*.¹⁵ This first evolute in its *adhyātma* aspect (i.e., *Citta*) is held as transparent, unpolluted by empirical tendencies and tranquil; and, all these epithets are possible in *Citta* due to its preponder-

¹⁰ vide above 2.5.22 ref. 6

¹¹ *viśvaṃ ātma-gataṃ vyañjan kūṣastho jagad-āṅkuraḥ* 3.26.20ab

¹² *viññānā'tmā* 3.5.27c

¹³ *mahat-tattvaṃ hiraṇmayam* 3.26.19d

¹⁴ *yad āhur vāsudevā'khyam* 3.26.21c

¹⁵ *sattvaṃ viśuddhaṃ vasu-deva-samjñitam*
yad iyate tatra pumān apūṛṭaḥ.
sattve ca tasmin bhagavān vāsudevo
hyadhokṣajo me namasā vidhiyate.. 4.3.23

ance of *sattva*. Hence it can legitimately be called the focal point for the revelation of God (*bhagavataḥ padam*).¹⁶ But, in spite of the prominence of *sattva*, *Mahat* represents *kriyā-śakti* as well. In fact, *Mahat* is the first concentration of *rajas* so that the evolutionary series may proceed without impediment. *Mahat* is therefore not only "*viññānātman*" i.e., the principle of enlightenment but it stands also for the principle of activity (*kriyā-śakti*) especially when it gives rise to the next evolute (*Ahaṁkāra*).¹⁷ We might therefore say that, as the transformation of the three *guṇas*, the first evolute constitutes all the three potencies—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—with the difference that *sattva* stands the highest, *rajas* next to it and *tamas* reduced to minimum.

Woodroffe explains the origin of the first evolute in the following way:—"In actual experience or functioning of the *tattvas* (*Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Manas* and *Indriyas*) in the fully evolved world, the knowing process commences with the last subjective principles or the senses. The object of knowledge first knocks at the gate to be introduced within, and to become subject to the inner operating principles, the last of which to so operate is the determining faculty. Thus the mind is through the sense organs affected by the objects which it selects (as *Manas*), refers to itself the personal experience so enjoyed (as *Ahaṁkāra*), and then determines (as *Buddhi*). But in the cosmic evolution of the principles the order is reversed. . . . A logical analysis of experience to which in the functioning of the individual mind reference is made last must necessarily in the cosmic evolution appear first".¹⁸ Having thus considered the origin of *Mahat*, Woodroffe deals with the nature of *Mahat* in the following vein:—"When *Buddhi* is born, energy previously undifferentiated assumes a definite direction and posture towards a definite line of evolution. This condition of directedness is aptly expressed by the term, determination (*adhyavasāya*). It is in the nature of cosmic volition. . . . It is massive (*mahān*), cosmic resolution in which the "how" and the

¹⁶ *yat tat sattva-guṇam svacchaṁ śāntam bhagavataḥ padam* 3.26.21ab

¹⁷ *mahatas tu vikurvāṇād rajaḥ-sattvopabṛmhitāt.*

tamaḥ-pradhānas tvabhavad dravya-jñāna-kriyā'tmakah.. 2.5.23

¹⁸ Woodroffe, pp. 21-22

"what" of operation are yet implicit ... From the point of evolution *Buddhi* is a state of mere presentation, consciousness of being only without the thought of "I" (*Ahaṁkāra*) and unaffected by the sensation of particular objects (*Manas*, *Indriyas* etc.). In short, abstract from mind every other of the faculties hereafter stated and you have *Buddhi* as their basis. In the individual, it is implicit in everything which is derived from it and includes all intellectual and volitional functions which are not theirs. It is thus the principal *tattva*. It is the basis of all knowing, feeling and willing. Its special function is determination which is last in the cognitive, affectional and volitional process.¹⁹ According to Woodroffe, then, *Mahat* is *resolution* which, both in its cosmic and individual aspects, lies at the basis of intellectual and volitional functions. This is essentially the view also of the *Bhāgavata*, as indicated above.

The evolutionary process reaches the second point when *Ahaṁkāra* evolves from *Mahat*, by the operation of *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* thereon. *Ahaṁkāra* is described as *kriyā-śakti* because at this point the emphasis is shifted from *sattva* to *rajas*.²⁰ *Ahaṁkāra* is also stated to be *tāmasa* in so far as the five subtle elements (*Tanmātra*) which gradually solidify into the gross universe derive directly their existence from it.²¹ As in the case of *Mahat*, *Ahaṁkāra* may be viewed from three aspects. In its cosmic aspect, *Ahaṁkāra* is the principle of individuation (*abhimāna*), the appearance of a centre in the cosmic mass (*mahat*). It is the principle of egoity (*asmitā*) from the individualistic point of view. And, regarded as the manifestation of a spirit (*adhidaiva*) it is called *Samkarṣaṇa*; as the direct source of diversity it is conceived as the thousand-headed *Puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*.²² But these three aspects—*adhidaiva*, *adhyātma* and *adhibhūta*— are also

¹⁹ *ibid*, pp. 37-38

²⁰ *mahat-tattvād vikurvāṇād bhagavad-vīrya-sambhavāt. kriyā-śaktir ahaṁkāras trividhaḥ samapadyate.. 3.26.23*

²¹ *mahatas tu vikurvāṇāt tamaḥ-pradhānas tvabhavati 2.5.23ac*

²² *sahasra-sīrasaṁ sākṣād yam anantaṁ pracakṣate. samkarṣaṇā'khyam puruṣaṁ bhūtendriya-manomayam.. 3.26.25*

construed by the *Bhāgavata* in a different sense in this context.²³ The *Bhāgavata* equates them with *jñāna-śakti*, *kriyā-śakti* and *dravya-śakti* respectively,²⁴ all of which find equal prominence when *rajas* and *tamas* occupy their rightful place beside *sattva*.²⁵

These three *śaktis* give rise to three sets of creation: Out of *jñāna-śakti* (also called *vaikārika*, *sahas* or *adhidaiva*) are born *Manas* (mind) (presided over by Aniruddha, the irresistible) and the ten gods, *Dīś*, *Vāta*, *Arka*, *Pracetas*, the twin *Aśvinī* brothers, *Vahni*, *Indra*, *Upendra* and *Mitra* that preside over the ten organs—five cognitive and five volitional. From *kriyā-śakti* (also called *taijasa*, *ojas* or *adhyātma*) emerge the knowledge aspect (*jñāna-śakti*) and the motivating aspect (*prāṇa*) that result in the five sense organs and the five action organs respectively. It may be noted here that the term "*jñāna-śakti*" thus occurs both in relation to the *vaikārika* and *taijasa* varieties of *Ahaṁkāra*. In relation the *vaikārika* or *sāttvika* *Ahaṁkāra* it refers to the mind (*Manas*), the principle of mere speculations (*saṁkalpa* and *vikalpa*). But in relation to *taijasa* or *rājasa* *Ahaṁkāra* it stands for cognitive organs that produce determinate knowledge of five varieties (recognised by Patañjali), viz, doubt, illusion, valid knowledge, memory and dreamless sleep.²⁶ Lastly, from *dravya-śakti* (also called *tāmasa*, *bala* or *adhibhūta*) originate the five subtle elements.²⁷ If we eliminate the ten gods, mentioned above, from the purview of purely physical creation, then *Ahaṁkāra* may be said to produce the mind, the ten organs and the five subtle elements

²³ *vīryam hiraṇmayam devo māyayā vyasṛjat tridhā.*

adhidaivam athā'dhyātmam adhibhūtam iti prabhuḥ..

2.10.13cd, 14ab

²⁴ *dravya-śaktiḥ kriyā-śaktir jñāna-śaktir iti prabho* 2.5.24cd

²⁵ *antaḥ-sarīra ākāśāt puruṣasya viceṣṭaḥ.*

ojas saho balam jajñe 2.10.15abc

Śrīdhara comments :—*ojas* = *indriya-śaktiḥ* ; *saha* = *manas-śaktiḥ* ; *balam* = *deha-śaktiḥ*.

²⁶ *dravya-sphuraṇa-vijñānam indriyāṇām anugrahaḥ.*

saṁśayo'ṭha viparyāso niścayaḥ smṛtir eva ca..

svāpa ityucyate buddher lakṣaṇam vṛttitaḥ pṛthak.. 3.26.29cd, 30

²⁷ *ahaṁ-tattvād vikurvāṇād mano vaikārikād abhūt.*

vaikārikās ca ye devā arthā'bhiyañjanam yataḥ..

taijasānindriyāṇyeva jñāna-karma-mayāni ca.

tamaso bhūta-sūkṣmā'dir yataḥ khaṁ līṅgam ātmanaḥ.. 3.5.30,32

vide also 3.26.23-26

from its *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmāsa* aspects respectively. As consisting in the three powers viz, *jñāna*, *kriyā* and *dravya*, *Ahaṁkāra* is said to be *dravya-jñāna-kriyā'tmaka* and as the source of three varieties of creation it is called *bhūtendriya-manomaya*. On the basis of rearrangement of the three varieties of creation, *Ahaṁkāra* may also be viewed as the source of subject-object series. As the mind, the "I"-experiencer, *Ahaṁkāra* is the agent (*karṭṛ*); as the ten organs, it is the instrument (*karaṇa*); and, as the five subtle elements, it is the object (*kārya*) of empirical knowledge.²⁸

Woodroffe throws light on *Ahaṁkāra* in the following strain:—"From the cosmic standpoint, *abhimāna* is the name for that stage of evolution, in which *Prakṛti* first individualises herself. To use physical analogies, it is the appearance of a centre or nucleus or axis of operation in the cosmic stuff... So long as this centre or axis has not appeared we have no beginning of actual evolution of the cosmic dust or vapour into the systems of heavenly bodies.... It is the individualising principle in nature; the cosmic Ego is the subtle state of all the manifold egos, conscious and unconscious whether in sentient beings or material things which make our world of experience... The individual *Ahaṁkāra* is the personal consciousness which realises itself as a particular 'I', the experiencer. This is the 'I' of empirical consciousness".²⁹

If *Mahat* is the cosmic resolution, a mere presentation of objectivity without specification, as Woodroffe has suggested, it does require, for the furtherance of the evolutionary process, what Woodroffe calls "an axis of operation". This specific direction or solidarity is called *Ahaṁkāra*, the cosmic ego that represents the totality of empirical existence. Such totality in the nature of things should consist of the knower, the known and the instrument through which the knower establishes his link with the known. In fitness of things, therefore, *Ahaṁkāra*, the ego centre, is taken to resolve into the mind (*jñātṛ*), the five rudimentary elements (*jñeya*) and the ten organs (*indriyas*) both cognitive and conative that communicate to the knower the message of the objects born of the five rudimentary

²⁸ *kārya-kāraṇa-kartrātmā bhūtendriya-mano-mayaḥ* 3.5.29cd

²⁹ Woodroffe, pp. 39-41

elements. To provide for these three sets of creation of mutually varying nature, *Ahaṁkāra* is said to undergo three variations, *vaikārika*, *taijasa* and *bhūtādi*, each of which represents the three *guṇas* in various proportions, such proportions being determined by the nature of creations they are intended to bring about. Thus *vaikārika*, *taijasa* and *bhūtādi* have the predominance of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* respectively with the other two *guṇas* playing subordinate role in each case. In so far as the mind is recognised by the *Bhāgavata* to reveal God it is naturally taken to emerge from *vaikārika*.

The emergence of the ten gods from the same source, as stated by the *Bhāgavata*, deserves some consideration here. The term "*deva*" literally means "that which reveals" and the *Bhāgavata* has adopted this meaning when it states that *devas* are so called because they reveal the objects.⁴⁰ In this sense the *devas* should refer to the ten organs that reveal the objects to the cogniser. But this meaning was a departure from the past in which the term stood for *sentient* gods like Indra and Varuṇa. Granted that even Indra and Varuṇa were at their core natural phenomena; but, as objects of adoration, they were spiritualised. The *Bhāgavata* has adopted this doctrine of spiritism so that godhood is not confined to the ten gods that lie behind the ten organs, but is extended to cover all principles of creation from *Mahat* to the five rudimentary elements (*Tanmātra*), taken to be inhabited and controlled by different gods. So there were as many of gods as there were principles of creation.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it needs be confessed that in the scheme of material physical creation gods as sentient beings should have had no place. However, as the *Bhāgavata* has described the ten sentient gods to emerge from the *vaikārika* variety of *Ahaṁkāra*, the ten organs, inhabited by the gods, naturally require a different origin. The *Bhāgavata* has therefore relegated both the cognitive and the conative organs to the second variety of *Ahaṁkāra*, the *taijasa*. The inclusion of the cognitive organs as well in the *taijasa* type, dominated

⁴⁰ *ye devā arthā'bhiyañjanam yataḥ*. 3.5.30d

⁴¹ *ete devāḥ kalā viṣṇoḥ kāla-māyā'mśa-līngināḥ* 3.5.38

Śrīdhara comments :—*kāla-līngam*=*vikṛtiḥ* ; *māyā-līngam*=*vikṣepaḥ* ; *aṁśa-līngam*=*cetanā* ; *tāni vidyante yeṣu*.

by *rajas*, may be justified when we take into consideration the hectic restlessness on the part of both the cognitive and the conative organs to ramble in the objective world. A different origin of the ten organs justifies their external nature as distinguished from that of mind which, as the internal apparatus, is specially privileged to receive the divine spark.

But the inclusion of both the cognitive and conative organs in the same category does not ignore their functional and other differences. The *Bhāgavata* therefore takes the sense organs to originate from cognitive aspect (*jñāna-śakti*) of *taijasa* while the action organs are traced to its conative aspect (*kriyā-śakti*) or *prāṇa*.³² In the *Upaniṣads*³³ the word "*prāṇa*" has a couple of connotations. In the wider sense it means the organs both cognitive and conative. But in the narrower sense it means "*mukhya-prāṇa*" i.e., the primary *prāṇa*, to which, according to the *Upaniṣads*, the organs owe their existence. Both the senses have found favour with the *Bhāgavata*. By "*mukhya-prāṇa*" the *Bhāgavata* understands *Mahat* (or *Ahaṁkāra*, its axis of operation), so called, as the *Bhāgavata* points out, because, as the source of all organs, it stimulates them to activity.³⁴ In this very context, the *Bhāgavata* has used the term "*prāṇa*" to denote all the organs as well. But in addition to these two senses the *Bhāgavata* has used the word "*prāṇa*" to refer to the five conative organs only.³⁵ In this way the ten organs are taken to have been derived from the *taijasa* variety of *Ahaṁkāra*. The third variety of *Ahaṁkāra* is *bhūtādi*. This should now engage our attention because evolutionary process is now concerned with this variety only.

The theory of causation adopted by the *Bhāgavata* renders the effect a manifestation of the cause. This means that the material cause is the subtle form of the effect. The chain of

³² *taijasanindriyāṅyeva kriyā-jñāna-vibhāga-śaḥ.*
prāṇasya hi kriyā-śaktir buddher vijñāna-śaktitā.. 3.26.31

³³ Ch U 5.1, for example.

³⁴ *prāṇo mahān asuḥ* 2.10.15d
anu prāṇanti yaṁ prāṇāḥ prāṇantaṁ sarva-jantuḥ.
apānantaṁ apānanti nara-devam ivānugāḥ.. 2.10.16

³⁵ *buddhiḥ prāṇaś ca taijasau* 2.5.31b
Śrīdhara comments on this:—*jñāna-kriyā-viśeṣa-rūpāṇi indriyāṇāṁ*
api taijasād abhavaṁ ūyarthāḥ.

causation which thus follows from *bhūtādi* is bound up at each stage with subtle and gross forms. The subtle forms are called *Tanmātras* while the gross are known as *Bhūtas*. Woodroffe argues in the following way to justify the existence of subtle forms:—"The ordinary man's perception of the paper is of the paper in itself perceived, subject to the limitation of the defects in him . . . Examining this paper of perception we find (1) that it is gross in the sense that it is patent, (2) that it is particular giving us mere sense particulars, (3) that it is complexus of form, odour etc. i.e., heterogeneous and (4) that it is variable according to the circumstances and instruments of perception. Upon an analysis, the elements which underlie this sense datum, must present, in order to be real, the following characteristics:—(1) they must not be gross but subtle, (2) they must not be particular but generic or universal, (3) they must not be complex and (4) they must not be variable . . . It is these generic, simple, subtle and standard elements of our particular, complex, gross and variable sense-data which are the *tanmātras* which again are the material causes of gross, sensible matter or the *bhūtas* . . . Being the elements of sense-data, they are necessarily of five kinds."²⁶

The origin of the five *Tanmātras* and that of their corresponding *Bhūtas* offer interesting illustrations for the conversion of energy into matter and vice versa. They also demonstrate how the three successive processes involved in each step of evolution, repeat themselves at this point as well. The *Bhāgavata* has dealt with the question of origin of the *Tanmātras* and their corresponding *Bhūtas* in three different contexts. From the first description appearing in the second *skandha*²⁷ emerge the following conclusions:—(1) One element (*Bhūta*) gives rise to another element (*Bhūta*). Thus from *bhūtādi* is pro-

²⁶ Woodroffe, pp. 63-67

²⁷ *tāmasād api bhūtā'der vikurvāṇād abhūn nabhaḥ.
asya mātṛā guṇāḥ śabdo līṅgaṁ yad draṣṭṛ-dṛṣṭayor..
nabhaso'tha vikurvāṇād abhūt sparśa-guṇo'nilah..
parā'nvayāc chaddavāmsi ca prāṇa ojaḥ saho balam..
vāyor api vikurvāṇāt kālā-karma-svabhāvataḥ..
udapadyata vai tejo rūpa-vat sparśa-śabda-vat..
tejasas tu vikurvāṇād āsīd ambho rasā'tmakam..
rūpavat sparśavac cāmbo ghoṣavac ca parā'nvayāt..
viśeṣas tu vikurvāṇād ambhaso gandhavān abhūt..
parā'nvayād rasa-sparśa-śabda-rūpa-guṇā'nvitah.. 2.5.25-29*

duced the element of ether (*Ākāśa*). Ether produces wind (*Vāyu*) which in its turn produces the element of heat (*Tejas*). The latter element generates water (*Ap*) of which lastly the element of earth (*Prithivī*) is born; (2) The effect being just the manifestation of the cause, the latter has to be recognised to endure through the effect. This means that not only ether persists in wind but *bhūtādi* also is present in it in so far as *bhūtādi* persists in ether; (3) It follows that in conformity with the doctrine of the manifestation of the quality (*guṇa*) of the cause in the effect, the element of heat, for example, acquires not only the quality of touch inherent in wind, the material cause of the element of heat, but it becomes endowed also with the quality of sound that belongs to ether, the material cause of wind. In this way the successive elements possess increasing number of qualities. Thus, while the element of ether has sound, wind has both sound and touch. Similarly, the element of heat possesses colour, touch and sound; water has taste, colour, touch and sound; and, lastly, earth is endowed with odour, taste, colour, touch and sound; (4) The steady increase of the number of qualities in the successive elements implies the innovation, in each case, of a new quality in addition to those that are already existent in the element which produces a particular element under consideration.

But this last conclusion raises an important problem. According to the specific doctrine of causation (*sat-kārya-vāda*), adopted by the *Bhāgavata* to explain the evolutionary process, the effect can have no quality which is not already existent in its material cause. How can, then, wind, for instance, have touch which is apparently absent in ether? The same question applies to the other new qualities of the successive elements. The *Bhāgavata* meets this question by the presupposition of a subtle form of each element, which (subtle form) serves as the intermediary of the causal situation between one element and another. If such subtle form is taken to emerge from the cause-element and is recognised as well to produce the effect-element, then it can be regarded as the intermediate which the cause-element necessarily involves in order to produce the effect-element. Such intermediate form serving as the precursor of a particular element is technically called "*Tan-mātra*". The *Bhāgavata* des-

cribes in the third *skandha*³⁸ how from *bhūtādi*, the mass-potency (*dravya-śakti*), is first born the subtle form of ether (*bhūta-sūkṣma*); and then, out of this subtle form, the unit-potential (*Tanmātra*), emerged the element of ether, though the ordinary observer might say that *bhūtādi* itself produced ether. In the same sense ether is stated to produce wind and so on. This means that an element generates the next element through the production of a *Tanmātra* i.e., a potential or fluid matter which is further condensed or hardened into kinetic or effective matter. In the same *skandha*³⁹ the *Bhāgavata* has also described the origin of the *Tanmātras*. It is said that a particular *Tanmātra* (unit-potential) emanates from its previous *Tanmātra* combined with the element which the latter *Tanmātra* has brought into existence. Thus, for example, touch-potential is brought about by sound-potential evolving in conjunction with ether which that sound-potential has produced, and so on.

It follows from this description that the origin of the *Tanmātras* and the *Bhūtas*, as we have already noticed in the cases of the evolution of the other categories beginning from *Mahat*, involves the three processes—mass-disintegration, energy-transformation and condensation. For instance, *bhūtādi* disintegrates by the operation of *Kāla* thereon; such disintegration releases the energy arrested in *bhūtādi*; the released energy then flows to a point with the aid of *Svabhāva*; finally the

³⁸ *tamaso bhūta-sūkṣmā'dir yataḥ kham....*
nabhaso'nusṛtaṁ sparśaṁ vikurvan nirmame'nilam.
anilo'pi vikurvāpo nabhasorubalānviṭaḥ.
sasarja rūpa-tanmātraṁ jyotir lokasya locanam..
anilenā'nvītaṁ jyotir vikurvāt para-vikṣitam.
ādhattā'mbho rasamayam kāla-māyā'mśa-yogataḥ..
jyotiṣā'mbho'nusamsṛtaṁ vikurvāt brahma-vikṣitam.
mahim gandha-guṇāṁ ādhāt kāla-māyā'mśa-yogataḥ..
bhūtānām nabha-ādīnām yad yad bhavyā'varāvaram.
tejaṁ parā'nusamsargād yathāsamkhyāṁ guṇān viduḥ.. 3.5.32-37

³⁹ *tāmasāc ca vikurvāṇād bhagavad-vīrya-coditāt.*
śabda-mātram abhūt tasmān nabhaḥ srotam tu śabda-gam..
nabhasaḥ śabda-tanmātrāt kāla-gatyā vikurvataḥ.
sparśo'bhavat tato vāyus tvak sparśasya ca sa grahaḥ..
vāyoś ca sparśa-tanmātrād rūpaṁ daiveritād abhūt.
samutthitam tatas tejaś cakṣu rūpopalambhanam..
rūpa-mātrāt vikurvāṇāt tejaso daiva-coditāt.
rāsa-mātram abhūt tasmād ambho jīhvā rasa-grahaḥ..
rāsa-mātrāt vikurvāṇād ambhaso daiva-coditāt.
gandha-mātram abhūt tasmād pṛthvī ghrāṇas tu gandha-gaḥ.. 3.26.32,
 35, 38, 41, 44

focal point of the flowing energy is condensed into an element by *Karman*. This shows that a *Tanmātra*, the subtle nucleus of an element, is brought about by disintegration of the mass (*bhūtādi* in the first case and an element in other cases), followed by the flow of the liberated energy to a focal point. The production of an element is the result of condensation of the *Tanmātra*, having reached the focal point.

So, the three operations of *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* are completed when both the *Tanmātras* and the *Bhūtas* are brought into existence, as distinguished from their operations in the case of every other category whose creation requires the help of all the three principles, *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman*. Yet, both the *Tanmātras* as well as the *Bhūtas* have found recognition as separate categories because the *Bhāgavata* scheme of causation does allow separate enumeration of both the cause and the effect. A *Tanmātra*, so created, is charged with a quality-potential which is actualised in the element created by that *Tanmātra*. For example, *Ākāśa-tanmātra* (the subtle nucleus of ether) is charged with sound-potential (vibration-potential, *parispanda*) and it finds expression as a specific energy viz, sound-stimulus (actual vibratory motion) in *Ākāśa* (ether) produced by *Ākāśa-tanmātra*. The presumption of a *Tanmātra* with a potential quality thus explains the appearance of a new quality in its successive element.

The principles from *Mahat* to the five gross elements, thus created under the urge of original stimulus (*Cit-śakti*) and by the co-operation of Time (*Kāla*), Nature (*Svabhāva*) and Action (*Karman*), now required to be knit into a homogeneous whole providing for psycho-physical organism both in cosmic and individualistic spheres. True, that all the categories, created so far, were ultimately sheltered in the surrounding medium of *Avyakta* which, as the primordial cause, pervaded all its evolutes, both direct and indirect; and, as the material cause, such *Avyakta* was the shelter of them all. But the unity leading to organism (*āyatana*) meant more than mere link between the primordial cause and its effects. So, once again the original stimulus moved *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* to operate upon the categories so that they can be synthesised into an organism.

Employment of original stimulus by God is described by the *Bhāgavata* as His penetration through the categories,⁴⁰ and, as a result, emerged organism, both cosmic and individualistic.⁴¹

The first offshoot of this synthetic process took the shape of a lump culled from the five gross elements. Due to its imagined shape and size it was presumed to be the cosmic egg (*aṇḍa*) and was called "*viśeṣa*" because it represented the stage of differentiation of the categories, directly giving rise to the different worlds.⁴² Like *Mahat* which put an end to the cosmic gloom, this egg was also conceived to be golden that dispelled the gloom of grossly physical vacuum.⁴³ Such egg, of course, was surrounded by the categories, as we have already mentioned above, of which the egg was just a moderate portion. But as this lump was largely earthly⁴⁴ it was noticeable in the womb of water-element that precedes the earth-element. The *Bhāgavata* describes how the cosmic egg lay dormant in the womb of cosmic fluidity for long long years amounting to a *kalpa* and how God lived in it in the company of all empiricist egos for the same period.⁴⁵ At the termination of a *kalpa*, God charged the lump of matter with his power of animation and so *Kāla*, *Svabhāva* and *Karman* began to function towards the hardening of the cosmic mass into tangible worlds.⁴⁶

The *Bhāgavata* describes this process of hardening, in some detail. At the end of a *kalpa* God awoke from His slumber

⁴⁰ *iti tāsām sva-śaktinām satinām a-sametya sah. trayo-vimśati-tattvānām gaṇam yugapad āviśat..* 3.6.1ab, 2cd

⁴¹ *yadaite'saṁgatā bhāvā bhūtendriya-mano-guṇāḥ. yad-āyatana-nirmāṇe na śekur brahma-vittama.. tadā saṁhatya cā'nyonyam bhagavac-chakti-coditāḥ. sad-asattvaṁ upādāya cobhayaṁ sasṁjgur hyadaḥ..* 2.5.32-33

⁴² *tatas tenānubiddhebhya yuktēbhya'aṇḍam acetanam. utthitam puruṣo yasmād udatiṣṭhad asau virāt.. etad aṇḍam viśeṣā'khyam krama-vyddhair daśottarairiḥ. toyādibhiḥ parivṛtam pradhānenā'vṛtair bahiḥ.. yatra loka-vitāno'yaṁ rūpaṁ bhagavato hareḥ..* 3.26.51-52

⁴³ *hiraṇmayād aṇḍa-koṣād utthāya salileśayāt. tam āviśya mahādevo bahudhā nir-bibheda kham..* 3.26.53
vide also 3.20.14

⁴⁴ *viśeṣo bhāvānām bhūmāveopalabhyate.* 3.26.49

⁴⁵ *hiraṇmayah sa puruṣah sahasra-parivatsarān. aṇḍa-koṣa uvāśā'psu sarva-sattvopabīrṁhitāḥ..* 3.6.6 vide also 2.10.11

⁴⁶ *varṣa-pūga-sahasrā'nte tad aṇḍam udakeśayam. kāla-karma-svabhāva-stho jīvo jīvam ajīvayat..* 2.5.34

of inactivity and found all creation absorbed in Him. A little portion (the cosmic egg) of the mass of elements sprouted from his naval region. That sprout gradually grew into a cosmic lotus by the operation of time which had at the same time helped the providence of the empirical egos to attain maturity. The golden lotus lit up the whole expanse of cosmic water. The awakening of God, the inner controller, stimulated Brahmā who, at the termination of the previous *kalpa*, had retired to the essence of God for a period of the same length. Brahmā then cast his eyes all around and found nobody beside himself. Actuated by God, he then took to long penance lasting for one thousand divine years. Strengthened by penance and inner light (*ātma-saṁsthā vidyā*), Brahmā then appeased elemental disturbances and discovered the lotus which had held him on. Brahmā then resolved to create the worlds out of the lotus. Helped by the energy of God he eventually divided the lotus into three or fourteen worlds.⁴⁷

The process of differentiation took, as usual, three different directions—*adhibhūta*, *adhyātma* and *adhidaiva*.⁴⁸ The *adhibhūta* aspect was represented by the creation of the planes of existence.⁴⁹ The *adhyātma* aspect provided for the different locations (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the ten organs while the *adhidaiva* aspect found its fulfilment in the settlement of multifarious gods in different parts of the body.⁵⁰ Thus, for instance, face, a part of the body, consisted of (i) the palate (*adhyātma* aspect—in which the organ of tongue settled), (ii) the different kinds of taste (*rasa*) (furnished by the planes of existence—*adhibhūta* aspect) and (iii) the god, Varuṇa, the presiding deity (*adhidaiva*

⁴⁷ *so'jayiṣṭā'bdhi-salile aṇḍa-koṣe nir-ātmakaḥ.*
sā'gram vai varṣa-sāhasram anvavātsit tam ilvareḥ..
tasya nābher abhūt padam sahasrārkoru-dīdhiti.
sarva-jīva-nikāyauko yatra svayam abhūt svarāj..
so'nupraviṣṭo bhagavatā yaḥ lete salilā'laye.
loka-saṁsthām yathā-pūrvam nir-mame saṁsthayā svayā.. 3.20.15-17
 vide also 3.8.10-16, 3.10.4-8

⁴⁸ *sa vai viśva-sjām garbhāḥ* 3.6.7a
sā'dhyātmāḥ sā'dhidaivāḥ ca sā'dhibhūta iti tridhā. 3.6.9ab

⁴⁹ *śiṣṇo'sya dyaur dharā padbhyaṁ kham nābher udapadyata.* 3.6.26ab

⁵⁰ 3.6.12-25

aspect)⁵¹; and so on. But in spite of this differentiation the cosmic egg or the lotus was only a clod, a dead inactive mass. It was only when God infused it with His divine presence that mind obtained Him as its controller; and, suffused with ten vital airs the entire mass attained the dignity of a living organism. In this sense the *Bhāgavata* describes how God diversified himself in three different ways—as one (controller of mind), as ten (the ten vital airs) and as three (*adhyātma*, *adhibhūta* and *adhidaiva*).⁵² So penetration by God of material differentiation made it a living organism⁵³ which then moved out from the state of chaotic inactivity. God, marked by this stage of infinite diversity, is described as having thousand heads and hands,⁵⁴ in short, the *Puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. In this way the cosmic mass developed into gross body, both cosmic and individualistic, in which categories from *Mahat* down to the five subtle elements, collectively called the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*), were habilitated. The individual soul and *Hiraṇyagarbha* became encased in the individualistic and the cosmic bodies respectively, while God was the controller of both.

Seven different parts of the upper half of the cosmic body moulded themselves into seven upper regions, *Bhū*, *Bhuva*, *Svar*, *Mahas*, *Jana*, *Tapas* and *Satya*,⁵⁵ while the seven parts of the lower half of that body reached out into the creation of seven lower regions, *Atala*, *Vitala*, *Sutala*, *Talātala*, *Mahātala*, *Rasā-*

⁵¹ *prāṇ mukhaṁ nirabhidya*
mukhatas tālu nir-bhinnaṁ jihvā tatropajāyate.
tato nānā-raso jajñe jihvayā yo'dhigamyate.. 2.10.17d, 18
 Śrīdhara comments:—*tālu adhiṣṭhānam jihvā indriyaṁ nānā-raso*
viśayaḥ varuṇas ca devatā jñāvyā. evaṁ sarvatra adhiṣṭhānam in-
driyaṁ devatā viśaya ityeta-catuṣṭayam anuktaṁ apyūhyam.

⁵² *sa vai viśva-sjām garbho daiva-karmā-tma-śakti-mān.*
vibabhājātmanātmānam ekadhā daśadhā tridhā.. 3.6.7

⁵³ *cittena hṛdayaṁ caityaḥ kṣetra-jñāḥ prāvīṣad yadā.*
virāḍ tadaiva puruṣaḥ salilād udatiṣṭhata.. 3.26.70

⁵⁴ *syjtvāgre mahad-ādini sa-vikārāṇyanukramāt.*
tebhyo virājam uddhṛtya tam anu prāvīṣad vibhūḥ..
yam āhur ādyaṁ puruṣaṁ sahasrāṅghyuru-bāhukam.
yatra viśva ime lokāḥ sa-vikāśam ta āsate.. 3.7.21-22

⁵⁵ *bhūr-lokaḥ kalpitah padbhyām bhuvar-loko'sya nābhītaḥ.*
hṛdā svar-loka urasā mahar-loko mahāimanah..
grīvāyām jana-loko'sya tapo-lokaḥ stana-dvayāt.
mūrdhabhiḥ satya-lokas tu brahma-lokaḥ sanātanaḥ.. 2.5.38, 39

tala and *Pātāla*.⁵⁶ The upper regions are placed one above the other and the lower regions one below the other. The old *Rg-Vedic* concept of the three worlds *Bhū*, *Bhuva* and *Svar* is also recognised by the *Bhāgavata* as another version of the planes of existence.⁵⁷

The *Bhāgavata* indulges in details of these regions. It offers a description as to how gradually man appeared on the face of earth and how he eventually evolved civilisation. To show that the existence of earth is a bondage for man, the *Bhāgavata* starts with the creation of *Avidyā*.⁵⁸ Then, *Brahmā* created six types of immovables,⁵⁹ twenty types of animals⁶⁰ and eight classes of *vaikṛta* gods.⁶¹ *Brahmā* thereafter set his hand to human creation for the propagation of his progeny. He first created spiritual hermits like *Sanatkumāra* etc. but they retired to forest.⁶² *Brahmā* was naturally disappointed and he then created *Nārada* etc., recognised as progenitors (*prajā-patis*).⁶³ Encouraged by the result of this creation *Brahmā* produced *Manus* and gave them human form.⁶⁴ Henceforth progeny began to increase by leaps and bounds, effected by the mutual co-operation of opposite sexes.⁶⁵ Gradually the four *Vedas* and the four castes were brought into being and this triumph of *Brahmā* won for him the title of "*śabda-brahman*".⁶⁶

Between *Bhū* and *Bhuva* (i.e., the abode of the sun) fall abodes of *Rāhu*, *Vidyādharas*, *Siddha-cāraṇas*, *yakṣa-rākṣasa-*

⁵⁶ *tat-katyāñ cā'talañ kṛptam urubhyāñ vitalañ bibhoḥ.
jānubhyāñ sutalañ suddhañ jañghābhyāñ tu talā'talam..
mahā-talan tu gulphābhyāñ prapadābhyāñ rasā'talam.
pātālañ pāda-talata iti loka-mayaḥ pumān.. 2.5.40, 41*

⁵⁷ *bhūr-lokaḥ kalpitāḥ padbhyāñ bhuvar-loko'sya nābhitaḥ.
svar-lokaḥ kalpito mūrdhna iti vā loka-kalpanā.. 2.5.42*

⁵⁸ *sasarja echāyayā'vidyāñ pañca-parvāṇam agrataḥ. 3.20.18ab*

⁵⁹ 3.10.19, 20

⁶⁰ 3.10.21-25

⁶¹ 3.10.28, 29

⁶² *sanakañ ca sanandañ ca sanātanam athā'tma-bhūḥ.
sanatkumārañ ca munin niṣkriyāñ ūrdhva-retasaḥ.. 3.12.4*

⁶³ *athā'bhidhyāyataḥ sargañ dala putrāñ prajājñire.
marīcīr atyañgirasau pulastyaḥ pulahaḥ kratuḥ.
bhṛgyur vasiṣṭho dakṣaḥ ca dāśamaḥ tatra nāradaḥ.. 3.12.21ab, 22*

⁶⁴ *tadā manūn sasarijānte manasā loka-bhāvanān. 3.20.49cd*

⁶⁵ *tadā mithuna-dharmēṣa prajā hyedhāmbabhūvire 3.12.54cd*

⁶⁶ 3.12.41, 46, 47

bhūta-preta-piśācas, placed one below the other so that the ghosts and the evil spirits are nearest to man.⁶⁷ Between *Bhuva* and *Svar* i.e., above the sun and below the high heaven (*Svar*) are placed *Śukra*, *Budha*, *Ravi*, *Bṛhaspati* and *Śanaīscara* one above the other.⁶⁸ Beyond them are the abodes of the hermits, extending to the length of eleven lacs of *yojanas*.⁶⁹ Beyond the region of the hermits is another expanse of eleven lacs of *yojanas* ending in *Dhruva* (the pole star). Several regions fall within this space.⁷⁰ *Dhruva* is stable.⁷¹ It is in fact the axis of constellations which continue their aerial journey till a *kalpa*.⁷² *Dhruva-loka* is the last limit of the three worlds.⁷³ *Dhruva* with the enormous group of stars is mystically described as “*śiśu-māra-cakra*”.⁷⁴ Within the three worlds, in the southern direction, below the earth and above water is the abode of Fathers (*Agniṣvāttā* etc.). The king of this region is the god of death. Twentyone or twentyeight types of hell belong to this region.⁷⁵

The three worlds of empirical enjoyment are separated from the higher regions by a boundary mountain called *Lokā-lokā'cala*. It is so called because the light of all the luminaries that illumine the three worlds fails to reach the upper regions, due to this mountain. Thus while half of this mountain re-

⁶⁷ *adhas-tāt savituh ... svar-bhānuh ... tato'dhas-tāt siddha-cāraṇa-vidyā-dharāṇām ... tato'dhas-tāt yakṣa-rakṣaḥ-piśāca-preta-bhūta-gaṇānām ... tato'dhas-tāt iyaṁ pṛthivī.* 5.24.1-5

⁶⁸ *atha ha dhāvan nabho-maṇḍalam ... sa (sūryaḥ) ha bhūñjita.. evaṁ candramā arka-gabhas-tibhya upariṣṭāt.. tata upariṣṭād uśanāḥ.. tata upariṣṭād budhaḥ.. ata ūrdhvaṁ aṅgārakaḥ.. tata upariṣṭāt.. bṛhaspatiḥ.. tata upariṣṭāt śanaīscaraḥ* 5.22.7-16

⁶⁹ *tata uttarasmād ṛjayaḥ ekādaśa-yojanā'ntare upalabhyante* 5.22.17

⁷⁰ *tasmāt paratas trayodaśa-lakṣa-yojanā'ntarato .. dhruvaḥ* 5.23.1

⁷¹ *sa hi... sthānur ivā'vaṣṭambhaḥ śvareṇa vihitāḥ* 5.23.2

⁷² *bha-gaṇā grahādayo dhruvam evā'lambya.. ā-kalpāntaṁ paritāḥ krāmanti* 5.23.3

⁷³ *sūryā'dināṁ dhruvā'pavargāṇāṁ jyotir-gaṇānāṁ gabhas-tayo'rvā-cināś trīṇ lokān āvītanvānāḥ...* 5.20.37

⁷⁴ *kecid etaḥ jyotir-anikaṁ śiśu-māra-saṁsthānena.. anuvārṇayanti* 5.23.4

⁷⁵ *narakā nāma.. antarāle eva tri-jagatyās tu diśi dakṣiṇasyāṁ adhas-tāt bhūmer upariṣṭāc ca jalāt. yasyāṁ agniṣvāttā'dayaḥ pīṭy-gaṇāḥ.. yatra ha vāva bhagavān pīṭy-rājo vaivasvataḥ... tatra haike narakān eka-vimśatiṁ gaṇayanti... aṣṭāvīmśatir narakāḥ...* 5.26.4-7

ceives light the other half does not.⁷⁶ On the other side of *Lokā'lokā'cala*, the regions of the *Yogins*—*Mahas*, *Jana*, *Tapas* and *Satya*—are laid out one above the other. But the *Bhāga-vata* does not seem to have much to say about them excepting that they are the destiny of pure beings,⁷⁷ free from fear, full of bliss and so standing for the spiritual welfare.⁷⁸ People who have the privilege to go in these regions enjoy the benefits thereof to their heart's content for as long as a *kalpa*⁷⁹ with the modification that at *Satya-loka*, the highest region, the period of enjoyment is extended to the maximum of *dvi-parā'rdha*.⁸⁰

Below the earth are situated the seven lower regions where demons, serpents and the like reside.⁸¹ There being no sun, the division of day and night does not exist in those regions.⁸² In *Atala* resides Bala, the son of the demon, Maya.⁸³ In *Vitala* lives Lord Śiva with His wife, Bhavānī⁸⁴ while in *Sutala* dwells Bali, in bondage,⁸⁵ where God acts as his door-keeper,⁸⁶ *Mahātala* is the region of serpents⁸⁷ and *Rasātala* is inhabited by *Daiṭyas*, *Dānavas* and *Paṇis*.⁸⁸ In *Talātala* resides Maya demon under the protecting arms of Mahādeva, free from the

⁷⁶ *lokā'loka iti samākhyā yad anenā'calena loka'lokaś cā'ntar-vartinā'va-sthāpyate. sa loka-traya'nte parita ilvareṇa vihitah... jyotiḥ-gaṇā-nām gabhastayaḥ.. yasmāt na kadā'cit paracina bhavitum utsahante* 5.20.36-37

⁷⁷ *tataḥ parastād yogesvara-gatiṁ viśuddhām udāharanti* 5.20.42

⁷⁸ *amṛtaṁ kṣemam abhayaṁ tri-mūrdhno'dhāyī mūrdhasu* 2.6.19cd

⁷⁹ *tad viśva-nābhīm tvativarttīya viṣṇor
anīyasā virajenā'tmanaikaḥ.
namaskṛtaṁ brahma-vidām upaiti
kalpāyuso yad vibudhā ramante..* 2.2.25

⁸⁰ *yad dvaiparādhyam tad u pārameṣṭhyam* 2.2.26d

⁸¹ *avaner adhastāt sapta bhū-vivarā ekaikaśo yojanā'yutā'ntareṇa āyama-vistareṇopakṣiptāḥ:—atalaṁ vitalaṁ sutalaṁ talā'talaṁ mahā-talaṁ rasā-talaṁ pātālam iti* 5.24.7; vide also 5.24.8-21 for details.

⁸² *yatra ha vāva na bhayaṁ aho-rātrā'dibhiḥ kāla-vibhāgair upalakṣyate* 5.24.11

⁸³ *athā'tale maya-putro'suro bala nivasati* 5.24.16

⁸⁴ *vitale haro bhagavān .. bhavānyā saha mithunibhūya āste* 5.24.17

⁸⁵ *sutale baliḥ* 2.24.18 vide also 8.22.32

⁸⁶ *yasya .. nārāyaṇo dvāri gadā-pāṇir avatiṣṭhate..* 5.24.27

⁸⁷ *mahā'tale sarpāṇām .. gaṇaḥ* 5.24.29

⁸⁸ *rasātale daiṭeya dānavāḥ paṇayaḥ* 5.24.30

terror of *Sudarśana*.⁹⁹ Lastly, in *Pātāla* dwells *Vāsuki*, the foremost of the serpents.¹⁰⁰ All these regions are suspended on the great *Samkarṣaṇa* (the law of gravitation?).¹⁰¹

To offer an idea of the staggering dimension of the cosmic egg (*brahmāṇḍa*) the *Bhāgavata* gives some details of the earth that constitutes only a minor part of it. The earth consists of seven great islands each of which possesses huge regions (*varṣas*), border mountains (*maryādā-giris*), rivers and beings that people these regions.¹⁰² The first of these islands is *Jambudvīpa* consisting of nine *varṣas* and border mountains. Each *varṣa* is as long as nine thousand *yojanas*, leaving *Bhadrāśva* and *Ketumāla*, each of which is thirtyfour thousand *yojanas* long.¹⁰³ *Jambudvīpa* consists of the following regions:—*Ilāvṛta-varṣa*,^{103a} *Bhadrāśva-varṣa*,¹⁰⁴ *Hari-varṣa*,¹⁰⁵ *Ketumāla-varṣa*,¹⁰⁶ *Ramyaka-varṣa*,¹⁰⁷ *Hiraṇmaya-varṣa*,¹⁰⁸ *Uttara-kuru*,¹⁰⁹ *Kimpuruṣa-varṣa*¹¹⁰ and *Bhārata-varṣa*.¹¹¹ The islands other than *Jambudvīpa* are inhabited by people who possess natural longevity, sense organs, vitality, strength, intellect and power.¹¹² The other islands are *Plakṣa-dvīpa*,¹¹³ *Sālmali-dvīpa*,^{113a} *Kuśa-dvīpa*,¹¹⁴ *Krauñca-dvīpa*,¹¹⁵ *Śāka-dvīpa*¹¹⁶ and *Puṣkara-dvīpa*.¹¹⁷

If we apply the term "subtle creation" to the categories from *Mahat* to the five subtle elements, we shall see that *Mahat*, the starting point of subtle creation, is but the affirmation of Divine Will (*Ātma-māyā*) to be many. Thus Divine Will evolving through *Māyā* and *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* takes gradually the form of cosmic resolution to be many. Such resolution is concretized into a centre (*aham*) of operation further

⁹⁹ *talātale mayo nāma dānavendraḥ... mahā-devena parirakṣitaḥ vigata-sudarśana-bhayo mahiyate* 5.24.28

¹⁰⁰ *pātāle vāsuki-pramukhāḥ... mahā-bhogino... nivāsanti* 5.24.31

¹⁰¹ *tasya mūla-dese... yaṁ samkarṣaṇa ityācakṣate* 5.25.1

¹⁰² *bhūmaṇḍalā'yāma-viśeṣaḥ... sapta-dvīpa-viśeṣa-vikalpaḥ* 5.16.2

¹⁰³ *yaṣmin (dvīpe) nava varṣāṇi nava-yojana-sahasrāṇi* 5.16.6

Śrīdhara comments:— *etac ca bhadrāśva-ketumāla-vyātirekeṇa draṣṭavyam tayor catus-triṁśad-yojana-sahasrā'yāmatvāt*

^{103a} 5.16.7 ¹⁰⁴ 5.18.1 ¹⁰⁵ 5.18.7 ¹⁰⁶ 5.18.15 ¹⁰⁷ 5.18.24 ¹⁰⁸ 5.18.29 ¹⁰⁹ 5.18.34

¹¹⁰ 5.19.1 ¹¹¹ 5.19.9

¹¹² *plakṣā'diṣu pañcasu puruṣāṇāṁ āyur indriyaṁ ojaḥ saho balaṁ bud-dhir vikrama iti ca sarveṣāṁ autpattikiḥ siddhir aveśeṣeṇa vartate* 5.20.6

¹¹³ 5.20.1 ^{113a} 5.20.7 ¹¹⁴ 5.20.13 ¹¹⁵ 5.20.18 ¹¹⁶ 5.20.24 ¹¹⁷ 5.20.29

dissolving itself into the cognizer, the instruments of cognition and the objects to be cognized. The objects to be cognized are further differentiated into the planes of existence including the individual bodies for the suffering souls. But the planes of existence find recognition as a living organism of *Hiranya-garbha*, the cosmic soul, in the same way as the individual bodies are living organisms of the individual souls.

In the description of the process of differentiation of the "gross creation" consisting in the planes of existence and the individual bodies, the *Bhāgavata* has apparently drawn upon the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of the *Rg-Veda*. The description of the *Bhāgavata* is however not a mere restatement of the old position but a reconstruction which has imbued the *Sūkta* with new significance. For example, the "virāt" of the *Sūkta* (*tasmād virāḍ ajāyata*) is the cosmic egg (*aṇḍa*) to the *Bhāgavata*; and, *Brahmā*, the creator of the gross universe, is called "*Hiranya-garbha*" because he emanated from the golden womb of the cosmic egg.¹⁰⁸ With unique insight into the dawn of *Vedic* thoughts, the *Bhāgavata* equates "*Hiranya-garbha*" with the sun. It seems to conjure up those remote days of creation when the golden light of the sun first penetrated through the dead clod of the cosmic egg (*mṛta aṇḍa*) and so the sun was called *mārtanḍa*.¹⁰⁹ The sun shone upon the cosmic egg for thousands of years; and, then, in course of time when the destinies of the individual souls had attained maturity, it differentiated the cosmic egg into the different planes of existence with variegated lives fluttering thereon. It was no wonder then that the sun should have the due recognition as the life-giving principle i.e., the cosmic soul.¹¹⁰ In the process of the further crystallization of thoughts the sun was elevated to the status of *Brahmā* and then to the status of God, the inner controller of *Brahmā*. The analogy between God, the *Puruṣa*, and the physical sun, brought in by the *Bhāgavata* to illustrate the nature

¹⁰⁸ *yasmād aṇḍam virāḍ yajñe* 2.6.22a

¹⁰⁹ *hiranya-garbha iti yad hiranyāṇḍa-samudbhavaḥ* 5.20.44
mṛte'ṇḍe eṣa'etasmin yad abhūt tato mārtanḍa iti vyapadeśaḥ 5.20.44

¹¹⁰ *sūryeṇa hi vibhajyante dīśaḥ khaṁ dyaur mahi bhidā*
svargā'pavargau narakā rasaukāṁsi ca sarvaśaḥ
deva-tiryak-manuṣyāṇāṁ sarisṛpa-khaga-virudhām
sarva-jiva-nikāyānām sūrya ātmā dṛg īvaraḥ 5.20.45-46

of the inner controller,¹¹¹ gives us one again a glimpse of the long-forgotten link between God and His crude prototype, the physical sun. The sun is thus the basis of the *Puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* and its permeation of the cosmic egg after being born of the latter makes it plausibly the "*adhi-puruṣa*" of the same *Sūkta* (*virājo adhi pūruṣaḥ*).¹¹² Life, man and his civilization are all gifts from the sun.

Another illustration of creative imagination which the *Bhāgavata* has brought to bear upon the interpretation of the same *Sūkta* is its conception of the fourteen worlds from the passage: "*tripād udait puruṣaḥ*". The three worlds were already recognised by the *Sūkta*; the *Bhāgavata* took this passage to mean the other three worlds—*Jana*, *Tapas* and *Satya*—besides the recognition of *Mahas* in the word "*ūrdhva*" of the same *Sūkta*.¹¹³ The description of the earth and the different constellations above the earth are new matters not to be found in the *Sūkta* and they throw light upon the ancient geographical and astronomical speculations respectively. But the concept of the upper worlds beyond the three worlds were still in a nebulous stage, lacking details. The seven lower regions present a picture of the admixture of popular myths and beliefs. But it is surprising that the *Bhāgavata* would be recognising *Samkarṣaṇa* (the principle of attraction or gravitation) to hold all the worlds together.

Creation, cosmic and individualistic, finds its fulfilment in the development of physical bodies and corresponding to each of them is a conscious principle. Behind the subtle creation there was God reposed on causal waters (*kāraṇā'rṇava*) as behind the gross creation lay the same Person on element waters (the water element) on which floated the cosmic lotus or the cosmic egg or the womb (*garbha*). God was "*Nārā-*

¹¹¹ *sua-dhiṣṇyaṁ pratapan prāṇo bahiḥ ca pratapatyasau. evaṁ virājaṁ pratapaṁ tapatyantar-bahiḥ pumān.* 2.6.17

¹¹² *trayovimśati-tattvānāṁ gaṇaṁ yugapad āviśat. hiraṇmayāḥ sa puruṣaḥ.* 3.6.2cd, 6a

¹¹³ *pādeṣu sarva-bhūtāni puṁsāḥ sthiti-pado viduḥ. amṛtaṁ kṣemam abhayaṁ tri-mūrdhno'dhāyi mūrdhasu* 2.6.19

yaṇa” because, having created waters, He entered them;¹¹⁴ and, Brahmā was Hiranya-garbha because he was within the cosmic lotus (i.e., (1) *Mahat*, in relation to the subtle creation, and (2) the physical mass brought about by the five gross elements). The individual bodies were integrated into the cosmic body just as the different conscious principles (*devas*) were merged in the essence of Brahmā. The cosmic body is traced to the cosmic egg, that to *guṇamayī Ātma-māyā* and that to God.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Brahmā merges into the being of God. In this way, both the sentient and the insentient belong to the essence of God who then shines on with His glory that declares the triumph of Divine Sport.

¹¹⁴ *puruṣo'ṇḍam vinirbhidyā yadā'sau sa vinirgataḥ.
ātmano'yanam anvicchann apo'srākṣic chuciḥ luciḥ..
tāsvavātsit sva-sṛṣṭāsu sahasraṁ parivatsarān.
tena nārāyaṇo nāma yad āpaḥ puruṣodbhavāḥ..*

2.10.10, 11 cf. 5.20.23

¹¹⁵ *etāvān eva aṇḍa-koṣaḥ, yai catur-daladhā purāṇeṣu vikalpita
udgiyate. 5.26.38*

CHAPTER XIV

THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL

Creation, impinging upon our ordinary experience, poses a practical question. Does creation in all its details represent the totality that the progressive journey of human consciousness can aspire to achieve? Does the world of science satisfy the demand for a philosophical interpretation of Nature? To put it in a clearer form: Should we accept the world as it appears to us, or, should we go beyond the verdict of common experience in search of a unity capable of lending meaning and significance to the discordant variety that we see and feel around us? If we accept the world at its face value we surrender ourselves to crude materialism. If, on the other hand, we dive deeper and can discover the world-ground that unifies the fibres of pragmatic details, we save ourselves by the liberating gospel of idealistic philosophy. This means that we re-trace our way back to the first principle, the harmony lost in the wilderness of worldly perplexity.

The *Bhāgavata* advises to launch upon the sustained search for Reality that lies within (*puruṣa*) the physical universe (Nature) and also within the ego-centres, (different bodies). In other words it advises to seek Reality both through the macrocosm and the microcosm. According to the *Bhāgavata*, to crown this exploration with success one should take the help of the *Vedas* that have incorporated the direct revelation (*pratyakṣa*) of the seers, and also of cogent logic (*anumāna*).¹ Cosmogonical passages from the *Upaniṣads*² bear testimony to the fact that creation, in its entirety, started from *Brahman* or *Ātman*, is sustained by it and will finally dissolve into it. The

¹ *ātmano gurur ātmaiva puruṣasya viśeṣataḥ.*

yaṭ pratyakṣānumānābhyām śreyo'sāvanuvindate... 11.7.20

² BU 1.4.1., TU 3.1., Ch U 6.2.1. etc.

Bhāgavata has envisaged these passages to bear upon the issue.³ In its attempt to establish the soul (*Ātman*) as distinct from physical existence with the aid of logic, the *Bhāgavata* focusses its attention upon a scrutiny of the human framework. Man's mind, sense organs and intellect that are usually employed to reveal an external object are by themselves unable to do so because, like the external object that requires something else for its revelation, mind etc., being equally dead clods, should require something else for their own revelation. So, the act of revelation on the part of the internal and external organs of man presupposes a reality that reveals its own self as it reveals all including the organs of man. The reality which thus deserves due recognition is called the soul.⁴ Similarly one might argue that the mechanism (mind etc.) which operates in the act of revelation of an external object is by itself the instrument (*karaṇa*) of knowledge; and, as an instrument, it always postulates an intelligent agent. So, the inner and outer organs of man depend for their operation upon an intelligent agent and such agent is the soul.⁵ Śrīdhara reminds us⁶ that such logic is not intended to give the impression that the soul is known solely by inferential knowledge; but only that it raises the presumption of the soul as a reality distinct from human body.

The *Bhāgavata*, however, chooses to fall back upon the logic adduced by the major *Upaniṣads* like the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya*⁷ to establish the soul and its distinction from body. It is the universal experience of everyday life that man undergoes three states of consciousness—waking state (*jāgrat*), sleep (*svapna*) and dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*). In the waking state man acquires knowledge through the external sense organs—the eyes, the ears and so on. In sleep the ex-

³ *atraiva myggaṇ puruṣaḥ... sarga-sthāna-samāmnāyair vimśadbhir a-satvaraiḥ...* 7.7.23c, 24c

⁴ *bhagavān sarva-bhūteṣu lakṣitaḥ svātmanā hariḥ. drīyair buddhyādibhir draṣṭā lakṣaṇair anumāpakaiḥ.* 2.2.35

⁵ *atra mām mygayantyaddhā yuktā hetubhir īṣvaram. grhyamāṇair guṇair līṅgair a-grāhyam anumānataḥ...* 11.7.23

⁶ *na caitāvatā anumānika ātmeti mantavyam; dehādivyatiriktatvaṁ padārtha-buddhi-mātrasyaivānumānena vivakṣitatatvāt—Śrīdhara on 11.7.23.*

⁷ BU 4.3.9-15, Ch U 8.10-12.

ternal organs are lulled into inactivity; yet man has experience in dream, brought about by his mind. In deep sleep dreams disappear and all diversity seems to dissolve into a unity.⁸ This state of dreamless sleep need not be taken as the extinction of man. For, when he comes back to the waking state after a while, he recollects profound happiness⁹ experienced in deep sleep. How could he have such recollection unless he himself had the *firsthand* experience of happiness in dreamless sleep and how could such firsthand experience be possible unless he himself *existed* at that time?¹⁰ This suggests that man as their experiencer endures through all the states of consciousness while the states alternate among themselves, one for the other. The alternation between two states with man persisting in both of them is obviously noticed at the juncture of sleep and waking.¹¹ One can then palpably feel the transition of man from one state to another.

What then is the lesson to be derived from the endurance of man through all the three states of consciousness and the changeability of one state in favour of the other during the same period? The lesson is bound to be like this: As the lamp endures through the flickering flames, or as water persists through the stream, or, as the same tree continues to exist through the innumerable fruits which it yields from year to year, so the same undivided soul runs through the three states of consciousness.¹² The logic of persistence (*anvaya*) of man in exclusion (*vyatireka*) of states is therefore useful to establish the soul of man as different from his body.¹³ It shows that

⁸ *yo jāgare bahir anukṣaṇa-dharmino'rthān
bhunkte samasta-karapair hṛdi tat-sadṛkṣān.
svapne suṣupta upasamharate sa ekaḥ
smṛtyanvayāt tri-guṇa-vṛtti-dṛg indriyetaḥ...* 11.13.32

⁹ *yena prasuptaḥ puruṣaḥ svāpaṁ vedā'tmanas tadā.
sukhaṁ ca nir-guṇaṁ brahma tam ātmānam avehi mām...* 6.16.55

¹⁰ *ubhayaṁ smarataḥ pumsaḥ prasvāpa-pratibodhayoḥ.
anveti vyatiricyeta taj jñānaṁ brahma tat paraṁ...* 6.16.56

¹¹ *supti-prabodhayoḥ sandyāvātmano gatim ātma-dṛk.
paśyan...* 7.13.5

¹² *yathā'rciṣāṁ srotasāṁ ca phalānāṁ vā vānaspathaḥ.
tathoiva sarva-bhūtānāṁ vayo'vasthādayaḥ kṛtāḥ...* 11.22.44

¹³ *atraya mṛgyaḥ puruṣaḥ
anvaya-vyatirekeṇa vivekenośatātmānā...* 7.7.23 c, 24 ab

(a) the soul is different from the body,¹⁴ and that (b) it witnesses the three states of consciousness.¹⁵ It reveals the three states in the same way as fire kindles a piece of log which it consumes.¹⁶ So, the analysis of the three states of man leads us to the conclusion that man is not just the body, gross or subtle. What uncritical mind calls 'man' is really the 'soul' of man; Soul, then, is other than both—man's gross body and his subtle body.¹⁷ It is more than what life (*mukhya prāṇa*) is. The soul is in fact the ground against which the pragmatic existence of man, including his three states of consciousness, is to be negated¹⁸.

The ground behind the physical world and the ground of the three states of consciousness limited in a particular body are ultimately one and the same. The *Vedas* and the arguments represent two different approaches—one intuitional and the other discursive—but both refer to the same reality. The *Bhāgavata* affirms this truth when, in the wake of the *Upaniṣads*, it declares perfect identification between the cosmic soul, the world-ground, and the individual soul, the ground of the three states in a particular centre of consciousness (i.e., a body).¹⁹ It is the identification of the individual soul with *Brahman* and *vice versa*.²⁰ The *Bhāgavata* extols this reciprocal identity to be the summit of realisation.²¹ The *Bhāgavata* thus reaffirms *Upaniṣadic* monism clothed in the Doctrine of the soul, associated with the name of the great *Yājñavalkya*.

¹⁴ *ātmanā ca gatim sūkṣmām sthāna-traya-vilakṣaṇām...* 6.16.61

¹⁵ *buddher jāgaranaṁ svapnaṁ suṣuptir iti vṛttayaḥ.
tā yenaivānubhūyante so'dhyakṣaṇaṁ puruṣaṁ paraḥ...* 7.7.25

¹⁶ *vilakṣaṇaṁ sthūla-sūkṣmād dehād ātmekṣitā sva-dṛk.
yathā'gnir dāruṇo dāhyād dāhako'nyaḥ prakāśakaḥ...* 11.10.8
vide also 12.5.3

¹⁷ *na śrotā nānupaśyāt yam mukhyo'pyatra mahān asuḥ.
yastviihendriyavān ātmā sa cā'nyaḥ prāṇa-dehayoḥ...* 7.2.45

¹⁸ *naitan mano vilati vāg uta cakṣur ātmā
prāṇendriyāṇi ca yathā'nalam arcīṣaḥ svāḥ..
śabdo'pi bodhaka-niṣedhatayā'tma-mūlam
arthoktam āha yad ūte na niṣedha-siddhiḥ...* 11.3.36

¹⁹ *aham bhavān na cā'nyas tvam tvam evā'ham vicakṣva bhoḥ.
na nau palyanti kavayaś chidraṁ jātu manāg api...* 4.28.62

²⁰ *aham brahma param dhāma brahmā'ham paramaṁ padam..
evam samikṣya cā'tmānam ātmanyādhāya nīkale...* 12.5.11

²¹ *etāvān eva manujair yoga-naipūṇya-buddhibhiḥ.
svārthaḥ sarvātmanā jñeyo yat parātmaika-darśanam...* 6.16.63

Although we have reached the soul through two different methods—one intuitional and the other empirical—yet the latter lacks the strength of an independent method for reaching its goal. Mere dialectic defeats its own end. The *Upaniṣads* therefore take recourse to logic merely to elaborate truth achieved by direct revelation. Logic being thus merely interpretative, truth is the special privilege of direct revelation. One therefore has to be sure about the relative importance of the *Vedas* and the arguments. In compliance with the empirical method propounded in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*²² the *Bhāgavata* also has recognised²³ the utility of the indirect method of negation (*neti neti*) in order to show what the soul is not. But the *Upaniṣads* are quite aware of their responsibility of offering a positivistic interpretation of the nature of the soul. The *Bhāgavata* has carefully culled different *Upaniṣadic* statements on this issue and has beautifully described the soul in terms of twelve aspects. The soul, declares the *Bhāgavata*, is eternal (*nitya*), immutable (*avyaya*), pure (*śuddha*), one (*eka*), witness (*kṣetra-jña*), the shelter of all (*āśraya*), unchanging (*a-vikriya*), self-luminous (*sva-dīś*), the primordial ground of causation (*hetu*), all-pervasive (*vyāpaka*), non-attached (*a-saṅga*) and perfect (*anāvṛta*).²⁴ The *Bhāgavata* has asserted the same in several other contexts.²⁵

The evidence of the *Upaniṣads* as to these twelve aspects of the soul may be corroborated by the conclusions arrived at above with the aid of the empirical method. The conclusions we have arrived at are: (1) the soul is different from the body, (2) it is the witness of the different states of consciousness, and (3) it is the ground of empirical negation. If we combine the first and the third conclusions we shall find that the difference between the soul and the body is based on the contrast between their mutual natures. Now, the nature of the body being already known to us we can naturally imagine the nature of the soul by way

²² BU 2.3.6

²³ *atraya mṛgayaḥ puruṣo neti netityatat tyajan...* 7.7.23 cd

²⁴ *ātmā nityo'vyayaḥ śuddha ekaḥ kṣetra-jña āśrayaḥ.*

a-vikriyaḥ svadīś hetur vyāpako'saṅgyanāvṛtaḥ... 7.7.19

²⁵ 4.20.7, 7.2.22, 10.47.31, 12.5.8, 3.26.3 etc.

of contrast with that of the body. Similarly, other features of the soul might follow from its witnessing character. First of all, the soul is the ground of creation as it is the ground of human body. It is, then, the cause of creation, solely responsible for the unfoldment of the cosmic process. In other words, it is the self-contained cause (*hetu*) which, independent of any other condition, brings the world into existence. Naturally, like the earth persisting through all earthen wares the soul pervades all (*vyāpaka*) just as ether does.²⁶ Like earth, again, serving as the shelter of earthen wares, the soul is the shelter of all creation (*āśraya*). As the diversity of earthen wares rises and falls against the unity of earth, so the diversity of creation does the same against the unity (*eka*) of the soul. Yet, as the presupposition of creation, the soul *per se* is the non-attached reality (*a-saṅga*) there being then no second to be attached to. Reposed on its intrinsic glory the soul is therefore pure (*śuddha*) and not in any way liable to birth and death (*nitya* and *avyaya*), the inevitable destiny of creation including the body²⁷ however super-fine that might possibly be.²⁸ In fact, the soul, in contrast with the ever-changing creation, is not liable to any change (*a-vikriya*). Being free from all limitations the soul is thus the perfect being (*anāvṛta*). The perfection of the soul means that the soul is pure being (*satya* or *nitya*). Lastly, the soul as the witness implies its self-luminous nature (*sva-dṛś*). The soul is the divine light that by its native splendour enlightens all. We cannot go beyond the soul in search of light; for, at the end one has to stop somewhere to declare the native light of the so-called ultimate reality and that ultimate reality is no other than the soul. To complete the picture, the *Bhāgavata* declares that the soul is not only pure being and pure knowledge but it is pure bliss as well.²⁹ To the *Bhāgavata*, then, the soul is pure being, pure knowledge and pure bliss.³⁰

²⁶ *antar-hitaś ca sthira-jaṅgameṣu
brahmātma-bhāvena samanvayena.
vyāptyā vyavacchedam asaṅgam ātmano
munir nabhasvaṁ vitatasya bhāvayet.. 11.7.42*

²⁷ *mṛtyur janmavatām vīra dehena saha jāyate.
adya vā bda-śatānte vā mṛtyur vai prāṇinām dhruvaḥ.. 10.1.38*

²⁸ *deva-saṁjñitam apyante kṛmī-vid-bhasma-saṁjñitam.. 10.10.10*

²⁹ *sukham asy ātmano rūpam.. 7.13.27a*

³⁰ *kevalā'nubhāvānanda-svarūpaḥ parameśvaraḥ. 7.6.23ab*

The presupposition of the soul to explain creation suggests the transcendental nature of the soul. This means that *per se* the soul is one without a second. How can such non-dual soul explain duality which the concept of creation necessarily involves? The *Bhāgavata* draws upon the concept of *Māyā* to explain this duality. The *Ṛg-Veda* had declared that *one* Indra appears to be many through his magical powers.³¹ The *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa* reiterated this truth.³² The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* invoked the same to explain creation; and, Indra was taken to mean *Brahman*, the infinite.³³ With infinite powers (*māyābhiḥ*) *Brahman* could not but be infinite. The *Bhāgavata* has exploited this well-established tradition to interpret how *one* became *two*. In the context of expounding the *Sāṃkhya* doctrine,³⁴ the *Bhāgavata* declares that there was at the outset pure consciousness without a second (*a-vikalpita*). But, as the outcome of *Māyā* (*māyā-phala-rūpeṇa*) *one* was bifurcated into the subject and the object. Thus the great (*bṛhat*) truth (*satya*) split itself, as it were, into being and becoming called *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* respectively, although by itself the great truth is beyond both of them.³⁵

It was, then, *Māyā* of Indra (*Brahman* or the soul) or the majesty (*mahiman*) of the Great *Puruṣa*, that Indra (*Brahman*, *Ātman* or *Puruṣa*) appeared as *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, the subject and the object, the being and the becoming. But, as appearance does not correspond to reality, Indra (*Brahman*, *Ātman* or *Puruṣa*) still remained settled in non-duality, that is, beyond *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. The appearance of duality in perfect harmony with non-duality is accepted by the *Bhāgavata*

³¹ *indro māyābhiḥ, puru-rūpo iyate.. RV 6.47.18*

³² SB 14.5.5.19

³³ BU 2.5.19. After the mention of Indra the *Upaniṣad* states : *tad etad brahma.... ayam ātmā brahma.*

³⁴ *atha te sampravakṣyāmi sāṃkhyam pūrvair vinīcitam. yad vijñāya pumān sadyo jalyād vaikalpikam bhramam.. 11.24.1*

³⁵ *āsij jñānam atho artha ekam evāvikalpitam. yadā viveka-nipuṇā ādau kṛta-yuge'yuge.. tan māyā-phala-rūpeṇa kevalam nir-vikalpitam. van-mano'gocaram satyam dvidhā samabhavad bṛhat.. tayo ekatara hyarthah prakṛtiḥ sobhayātmikā. jñānam tvanyatamo bhāvah puruṣah so'bhidhiyate.. 11.24.2-4*

when it says that the soul allows itself to be apprehended as two although by itself it has transcended both.³⁶ And, such harmony is possible due to the supra-logical character of *Māyā*.³⁷ *Māyā*, creates the duality of the subject and the object,³⁸ and as far back as human intelligence can go such duality has been there, although being the creation of *Māyā* it is imaginary and cannot therefore claim the finality of truth.³⁹ The duality of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* should have been of uncompromising nature because of their mutually contradictory character. Yet, due to *Māyā*, again, these two meet and creation follows as a result.⁴⁰

The meeting of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* consists in their superimposition of each other's nature⁴¹ and the result of this meeting is the birth of the empirical soul (*Jīva*). Just as bubbles arise out of the combined operation of water and wind, so the empirical souls came into existence from *Puruṣa*, when *Prakṛti*, due to its conjunction with *Puruṣa*, operated thereon.⁴² The *Bhāṣya* has tried to explain the emergence of the empirical souls on the analogy of reflection (*pratibimba*) and also of limitation (*avaccheda*). As man is reflected in a mirror or in another person's eyes⁴³ or in water⁴⁴ so *Brahman* (*Puruṣa*) reflects itself in *Prakṛti* and this reflection is the empirical soul. Or,

³⁶ *pratyag-ātma-svarūpeṇa dṛṣya-rūpeṇa ca svayam.*
vyāpṛya-vyāpaka-nirdēṣyo hyanirdēṣyo'vikalpitaḥ.. 7.6.22

³⁷ *seyam bhāṣavato māyā yan nayena virudhyate.*
ilvarasya vimuktasya kārṇavyam uta bandhanam.. 3.7.9

³⁸ *aviveka-kṛtaḥ puṁso hyartha-bheda ivā'tmani.*
guṇa-doṣa-vikalpaḥ ca bhīdeva srajiṣat kṛtaḥ.. 6.17.30
vide also 1.7.5 and 4.28.61

³⁹ *deha-dehi-vibhāgo'yam a-viveka-kṛtaḥ purā.*
jāti-vyakti-vibhāgo'yam yathā vastuni kalpitaḥ.. 6.15.8

⁴⁰ *ātma-māyām ite rājan parasyā'nubhāvātmanah.*
na ghaṭetārtha-sambandhaḥ svapna-draṣṭur ivāñjasā.
bahu-rūpa ivā'bhāti māyā bahu-rūpayā.. 2.9.1, 2ab
vide also 11.22.29

⁴¹ *prakṛtiḥ puruṣaḥ cobhau yadyapyātma-vilekṣaṇau.*
anyonyāpārayāt kṛṣṇa dṛṣyate na bhīdā tayoh.
prakṛtau lakṣyate hyātmā prakṛtiḥ ca tathātmani.. 11.22.26

⁴² *na ghaṭata udbhavaḥ prakṛti-puruṣayor ajayor*
ubhaya-yujā bhavantiyasu-bhṛto jala-budbuda-vat.. 10.87.31 ab

⁴³ *yathā puruṣa ātmānam ekam ādarśa-caṅkṣuṣoh.*
dvidhā-bhūtam avekṣeta tathāivāntaram āvayoh.. 4.28.63

⁴⁴ *nimitte sati sarvatra jalādāvapi pūruṣaḥ.*
ātmanas ca parasyāpi bhīdām paśyati nānyadā.. 4.22.29

just as the ether bound by a pitcher appears to be different from the ether outside it, so the empirical soul appears to differ from *Brahman*.⁴⁵ That the *Bhāgavata* is inclined to these two analogies is borne out by the fact that it mentions both of them in the same context at one place.⁴⁶ According to the *Bhāgavata*, *Puruṣa* or rather the Great *Puruṣa* is reflected in intellect, the first manifestation of *Prakṛti*. Being predominantly transparent (*sāttvika*), intellect is immensely suitable for receiving the reflection of the Great *Puruṣa*; and, this reflection is the empirical soul. The empirical soul being the reflection on intellect, the latter is called the sheath (*kośa*) of the former.⁴⁷ For the same reason, *Jīva* is described as the swan of the lake of intellect.⁴⁸ In the wake of the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*⁴⁹ the *Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad* describes the soul as a migratory bird that has found new settlement in different bodies.⁵⁰ As intellect varies from person to person, so *Jīva*, the reflection-*puruṣa*, appears to be different in each intellect.⁵¹ Thus circumscribed, *Jīva* is called the part (*aṁśa*) of the Great *Puruṣa*.⁵² We might take this "*aṁśa*" to mean that the Great *Puruṣa* descended in the composite body (*pura*)⁵³ and was called *Jīva*. The *Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad* passage that the soul became *many* in each form may be construed in this light.⁵⁴ Duality between *Jīva* and the Great *Puruṣa* disappears only when intellect, the

⁴⁵ *ghoṣe bhinne ghaṭākāśa ākāśaḥ syād yathā purā. evaṁ dehe mṛte jīvo brahma sampadyate punaḥ...* 12.5.5

⁴⁶ *eka eva paro hyātmā sarveṣāṁ api dehinām. nāneva gṛhyate mūḍhair yathā jyotir yathā nabhaḥ...* 10.54.44

⁴⁷ *hṛdayaṁ jīva-koṣam* 4.22.26 c

⁴⁸ *evaṁ sa mānaso haṁso haṁsena pratibodhitāḥ...* 4.28.64 ab

⁴⁹ SB 14.5.5.18

⁵⁰ BU 2.5.18

⁵¹ *ātmānam indriyārthaṁ ca paraṁ yad ubhayaṁ api. satyāśaye upādḥau vai pumān paśyati nānyadā...* 4.22.28

⁵² *sva-kṛta-pureṣvamiṣvabāhir-antar a-saṁvaranāṁ. tava puruṣaṁ vadantyakhila-śakti-dhṛto'mśa-kṛtam...* 10.87.20

⁵³ *puruṣaṁ purañjanaṁ vidyāt yad vyanaktyātmanaḥ puram. eka-dvi-tri-catuṣ-pādaṁ bahu-pādaṁ a-pādaṁ...* etc. 4.29.2-25

⁵⁴ *rūpaṁ rūpaṁ prati-rūpo babhūva.* BU 2.5.19

condition of this duality, is annihilated by supreme knowledge.⁵⁵ According to the *Bhāgavata*, then, *Jīva* is the Great *Puruṣa* circumscribed by intellect.⁵⁶

In fact, the *Bhāgavata* draws upon the *Upaniṣadic* tradition to delineate the nature of the empirical soul. The cosmogonic hymn of the *Rg-Veda* had recognised the revelation of Reality in the "hṛd" of man.⁵⁷ Following this, the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* has stated that "hṛdayam", a synonym of "hṛd", is so called because the soul is perceived in "hṛd" (*hṛdi ayam iti*).⁵⁸ The *Bhāgavata* understands by the term "hṛdaya" the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) consisting of mind (*Manas*), intellect (*Buddhi*), egoity (*Ahaṁkāra*) and reflection (*Citta*).⁵⁹ Mind etc. are not independent realities but are different aspects of the inner mechanism.⁶⁰ The Great *Puruṣa* reflected on this inner mechanism is called the empirical soul. But in so far as, in the scheme of the *Bhāgavata*, *Citta* or the act of reflection is the highest among the fourfold activities of the inner mechanism, the soul is said to be reflected on *Citta*.⁶¹ In other words, the inner mechanism in its act of reflecting the soul

⁵⁵ *yadā ratir brahmaṇi naiṣṭhiki pumān
ācāryavān jñāna-viraga-ramhasā.
dahatyavīryam hṛdayam jīva-kolaṁ
pañcātmakam yonim ivotthito'gnih..
dagdhāśayo mukta-samasta-tad-guṇo
naivātmano bahir antar vicaste.
parātmanor yad vyavadhānam purastāt
svapne yathā puruṣas tad-vināśe.. 4.22.26-27*

⁵⁶ *aham-matīyā bhāsitayā sva-bhāṣā puruṣaḥ. 10.20.19*

⁵⁷ *sato bandhum asati nir-avindan
hṛdi pratiṣṭhā kavayo manīṣā.. RV 10.129.4*
Obviously this passage inspired the *Bhāgavata* to write :—
*mukta-līngam sad-ādhāsam asati pratipadyate.
sato bandhum asac-cakṣuḥ sarvānuyūtam adwayam.. 3.27.11*

⁵⁸ *sa vā eja ātmā hṛdi ; tasya etad eva niruktam—
hṛdi ayam iti Ch U 8.3.3.*

⁵⁹ *athāśya hṛdayam bhinnam hṛdayān mana utthitam.
manasaś candramā jāto buddhir bhuddher girām patiḥ.
ahamkāras tato rudraś cittam caityas tato bhavat.. 3.26.60 cd, 61*

⁶⁰ *mano buddhir ahamkāraś cūttam ityantarātmakam.
catur-dhā lakṣyate bhedo vṛttīyā lakṣaṇa-rūpayā.. 3.26.14*

⁶¹ *hṛdayam manasā candro nodatiṣṭhat tadā virāṭ..
buddhyā brahmā'pi hṛdayam nodatiṣṭhat tadā virāṭ.
rudro'bhīmatīyā hṛdayam nodatiṣṭhat tadā virāṭ..
cittena hṛdayam caityaḥ kṣetrajñāḥ prāviśad yadā.
virāṭ tadaiva puruṣaḥ salilād ud-atiṣṭhata.. 3.26.68 cd, 69, 70*

(the Great *Puruṣa*) is called *Citta*. So, according to the *Bhāgavata*, the individual soul is the reflection of the Great *Puruṣa* on inner mechanism.

The conclusions that emerge from the aforesaid nature of the empirical soul are: (1) the empirical soul, being the mere shadow of the real soul, is nothing but the real soul, (2) the real soul being one, all empirical souls are in fact one and same reality, (3) in spite of their fundamental oneness the empirical souls appear to be different from one another due to the mutual difference of the inner mechanisms in different gross bodies, (4) being the reflections on inner mechanisms they continue to be embroiled in pragmatic existence as long as the inner mechanisms do not disappear with the dawning of knowledge and (5) as long as the conditions of difference i.e., the inner mechanisms continue to exist the empirical souls appear not only different from one another but also different from the real soul, the Great *Puruṣa*.

The *Bhāgavata* recognises the unity of the soul when it declares that the Great *Puruṣa*, the ground of all creation, appears to be many in relation to different bodies just as fire does in different woods or the life breath does in its distribution in different parts of the body or the all-embracing ether does in connection with different objects.⁶² It is the same soul that pervades all from the gross fourteen worlds to the unmanifest.⁶³ The appearance of difference of the same soul in different bodies is entirely due to the differentiation of the three *guṇas*.⁶⁴ The soul may therefore be described to partake of two different, nay, apparently antagonistic characters, the transcendental and the empirical. As the transcendental, the soul remains absolutely unsoiled by the impurities of *Prakṛti* although it always dwells therein. But, as the empirical, it is steeped in *Prakṛti*

⁶² *yathā'nalo dāruṣu bhinna iyate
yathā'nilo deha-gataḥ prthak sthitah.
yathā nabhaḥ sarva-gataḥ na sajjate
tathā pumān sarva-guṇāstrayaḥ paraḥ..* 7.2.43; vide also 3.28.43

⁶³ *parāvareṣu bhūteṣu brahmānta-sthavarādiṣu.
bhautikeṣu vikāreṣu bhūteṣvatha mahatsu ca.
guṇeṣu guṇa-sāmye ca guṇa-vyatikare tathā.
eka eva paro hyātmā bhagavān īśvaro'vyayaḥ..* 7.6.20-21

⁶⁴ *grhyamānais tvam agrāhyo vikāraiḥ prakṛter guṇaiḥ.
ko nvihārhati vijñātum prak-siddham guṇa-samvṛtaḥ..* 10.10.32

and disowns its own self in favour of a fictitious one.⁶⁵ If the empirical soul can legitimately be described as the vital force (*Jiva*) that instills life in body, then the transcendental soul should all the more acquire that designation (*Jiva*) because the empirical soul is, at its core, nothing but the transcendental soul. The *Bhāgavata* therefore uses the term "*Jiva*" in relation to the Great *Puruṣa* as well, that enlivens all creation.⁶⁶

If, on the other hand, the empirical aspect and the transcendental aspect are looked upon to refer to two different realities, this leads us to the well-known concept of two birds, often referred to in the *Vedic* literature.⁶⁷ Following this tradition the *Bhāgavata* describes how the two birds, namely, the empirical soul and the transcendental soul are perched upon the same tree (i.e., the human body) of which one, the empirical, goes on tasting the fruit thereof while the other, the transcendental, merely looks on.⁶⁸ The *Bhāgavata* has further elaborated this difference between the two souls. While the transcendental soul is eternally free (*nitya-mukta*), pure (*pariśuddha*), omniscient (*vibuddha*) real (*ātman*), immutable (*kūṭastha*), the eternal *Puruṣa* (*ādi-puruṣa*), the sovereign (*bhagavān*) and the master of the three *guṇas* (*tryadhīśa*), the empirical soul is in bondage (though liable to liberation by the grace of God), impure, ignorant, unreal, liable to changes, originates, is labouring under limitations and is sub-

⁶⁵ *prakṛti-stho'pi puruṣo nājyate prakṛter guṇaiḥ.*
a-vikārād a-kartṛtvān nir-guṇato'j jalārkaavat..
sa eja yarhi prakṛter guṇeṣvabhivijjate.
ahamkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate.. 3.27.1-2

⁶⁶ *evam yoni-gato jīvāḥ sa nityo nir-ahamkṛtāḥ.*
eja nityo'vyayaḥ sūkṣma eja sarvāśrayaḥ sva-dṛk.
ātma-māyā-guṇair viśvam ātmānam sṛjate prabhuh..
 6.16.8ab, 9, vide also 5.15.13

tvam ilīṣe jagatas tasthujāś ca
prāṇena mukhyena patiḥ prajānām.. 7.3.29ab

⁶⁷ RV 1.164.20, AV 9.9.20, Mun U. 3.1.1. etc.

⁶⁸ *suparṇāvetau sadṛśau sakhāyau*
yadṛcchayaitau kṛta-niḍau ca vṛkṣe.
ekas tayoh khādati pippalānnam
anyo nir-anno'pi balena bhūyān..
ātmānam anyān ca sa veda vidvān
a-pippalādo na tu pippalādaḥ.
yo'vidyayā yuk sa tu nitya-baddho
vidyamayo yaḥ sa tu nitya-muktaḥ.. 11.11.6-7

jected to the three *guṇas*.⁶⁹ These characters of the empirical soul should be understood on the analogy of reflection and its prototype. While the reflection-moon seems to tremble with the ripples, the prototype-moon in the sky shines on, unaffected. Similarly the reflection-soul (i.e., the empirical soul) is caught by the attributes of the world while the prototype-soul (the real soul, the Great *Puruṣa*) remains settled in its native glory.⁷⁰

Nevertheless as the empirical soul is but real soul, so the worldliness of the empirical soul cannot be real. As the tremor of water is attributed to the tree that has cast its shadow on water, or, as the moving eyes attribute their own movement to the earth, so worldliness is ascribed to the empirical soul.⁷¹ Just as rice is boiled by the heat of the pot on which it is placed, so the empirical soul is affected by the states of physical existence.⁷² That is how the agency which really belongs to the inner mechanism is ascribed to the soul as the rolling of the head is attributed to the earth.⁷³

The foregoing paragraphs may be summed up as follows:— (1) The ultimate ground of both the physical world and the bodies is the soul, (2) the soul is one, pure consciousness and pure bliss, (3) although the non-dual reality, the soul bifurcates itself into the subject and the object, called *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, through its intrinsic power called *Māyā*, (4) *Puruṣa* or rather the Great *Puruṣa* reflected upon the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) is called *Jīva*, the empirical soul, (5) as there is identity between reflection and its prototype and yet as they

⁶⁹ *tvam nitya-mukta-pariśuddha-vibuddha ātmā kūṣa-stha ādi-puruṣo bhagavānś tryadhīṣaḥ yad buddhyavasthītim a-khaṇḍitayā sva-dṛṣṭyā draṣṭā sthītā vādhi-makho vyatirikta āsse..* 4.9.15

⁷⁰ *yathā jale candramasaḥ kampaḍis tat-kṛto guṇaḥ. dṛṣyate'sann api draṣṭur ātmano'nātmano guṇaḥ..* 3.7.11

⁷¹ *yathā'mbhasā pracalātā taravo'pi calā iva. cakṣuṣā bhrāmyamāṇena dṛṣyate calatīva bhūḥ.. evaṃ guṇair bhrāmyamāṇe manasyavikalāḥ pumān. yāti tat-sāmyatām bhadre hyaliṅgo liṅgavān iva..* 7.2.23-24, 11.22.54

⁷² *sthālyagni-tapāt payaso'pi tāpas tat-tāpatas taṇḍula-garbha-randhiḥ. dehendriyāsvāśaya-sannikarṣāt tat-samśṛtiḥ puruṣasyānurodhāt..* 5.10.22

⁷³ *yathā bhrāmarikā-dṛṣṭyā bhrāmyatīva mahīyate. cītte kartari tat-rātmā kartevāhaṃ-dhiyā smṛtaḥ..* 10.46.41

appear as different from each other, so the empirical soul is identical with the real soul although the former appears different from the latter, (6) because one and same soul is described as reflection and its prototype, one might say by combining both the reflection and its prototype that the soul as reflection is immanent in creation while as the prototype the soul transcends it as well. This last conclusion may be applied to the cosmic sphere as well. One might say that *Puruṣa*, the personal God, as reflection on *Prakṛti* is immanent in the universe while as the prototype of the same reflection, He has transcended *Prakṛti*. Taking the empirical soul and God together one might then say that the soul is immanent as well as transcendent both in macrocosm and microcosm, and (7) all this is possible because of *Māyā*.

Māyā, as distinguished from *Cit-śakti*, the principle of knowledge, is the principle of illusion. It is mere appearance without any correspondence to reality.¹⁴ Illusion, as we know from ordinary experience, involves first the concealment of the true nature of an object and secondly its appearance as something else. A case of illusion would therefore require:—(1) a real object to serve as the substratum of illusion, (2) concealment of the true nature of that real object, i.e., revelation of that object just as an object and non-revelation of it in terms of its distinctive qualities, (3) somehow the existence of an object which is other than the real object, the substratum of illusion and (4) the appearance of the real object in terms of the other object i.e., the appearance of the real object as a counterfeit reality which the real object is not. These conditions may conveniently be applied to explain the operation of *Māyā*.

The *Bhāgavata* has recognised *Māyā*, as we have already noticed, to evolve into two principles—*Avidyā* and *Prakṛti*—the first to provide for the concealment of the true nature of the soul and the second to bring into existence the empirical world which can serve as the counterfeit self of the soul. The appearance of worldliness on the part of the soul is therefore based upon the ignorance of the true nature of the soul¹⁵ serving as

¹⁴ *mṛga-tṛṣṇām yathā bālā manyanta udakāśayam.
evam vaikārikīm māyām a-yuktā vastu cakṣate...* 10.73.11

¹⁵ *ātma'grahaṇa-nirbhātaḥ paśya vaikalpikam bhramam...* 11.22.57cd.

the substratum of the illusion of duality.⁷⁶ This obliteration of the true nature of the soul, brought about by *Avidyā*, constitutes the very basis of empiricity of the soul.⁷⁷ *Avidyā* consists in the ignorance which shuts out the knowledge that the soul being the world-ground is different from the world just as earth against which the earthen wares rise and fall is different from the earthen wares.⁷⁸ Loss of this knowledge has been described as suicide⁷⁹ or taking poison⁸⁰ and is the root of all sorrows.⁸¹ When *Prakṛti*, consisting of the three *guṇas* appearing against *Brahman* in the same way as light, floating cloud and darkness do in the sky, creates the subtle and gross universe, *Avidyā* ascribes this universe to the soul which then appears as the objective world.

The objective world may be viewed, as it has been viewed by the *Bhāgavata*, either as a totality or as individual units. The soul appearing as bound to the totality is *Hiraṇyagarbha* and the same appearing as limited to an individual unit is man. So, all living beings from *Hiraṇyagarbha* down to man are included in the category of empirical souls.⁸² The entire creation from *Mahat* to the fourteen worlds constitute the empirical form, the counterfeit self of *Hiraṇyagarbha*, and the same in its individualistic aspect, from *Buddhi* to the gross body, provides the counterfeit self of man. In the light of the reflection-theory, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, as the reflection on *Mahat*,

⁷⁶ *deha ādyantavān eṣa dravya-prāṇa-guṇātmakeḥ.
ātmanyavidyayā kṣiptaḥ saṁsārayati dehinam..* 10.54.45

⁷⁷ *anādyavidyopahatātma-samvidah
tan-mūla-saṁsāra-pariśramātūrāḥ..* 8.24.46 ab

⁷⁸ *bhūvi bhaumāni bhūtāni yathā yāntyaṣayānti ca.
nāyam ātmā tathaitesu viparyeti yathāiva bhūḥ..
yathānavaṁ vido bhedo yathā ātma-viparyayaḥ.
deha-yoga-viyogau ca saṁsṛtir na nivartate..* 10.4.19-20

⁷⁹ *na bata ramantyaḥ asad-upāsanayā'tma-hanaḥ.* 10.87.22c

⁸⁰ *yaś tvāṁ viṣjate marttya ātmānaṁ priyam iṣvaram.
viparyayendriyārthārthaṁ viṣaṁ atyayantaṁ tyajan..* 10.63.42

⁸¹ *lokaḥ svayaṁ freyasi naṣṭa-dṛṣṭir
yō'rthān samiheta nikāma-kāmaḥ.
anyonya-vairāḥ sukha-leśa-hetor
ananta-duḥkhaṁ ca na veda mūḍhaḥ..* 5.5.16

⁸² *haṁsāvaham ca tvāṁ cā'rya sakhāyau mānasāyanau.
abhūtāṁ antarā vaukaḥ sahasra-parivatsarān..
sa tvāṁ vihāya mām bandho gato grāmya-matir mahim.
vicaran padam adrākṣiḥ kayācin nirmitaṁ striyā.* 4.28.54-55

loses the sense of his identity with the Great *Puruṣa* or rather the *Vāsudeva Vyūha*, his prototype, and falsely thinks himself identified with *Mahat* and all its evolutes. In the same way, the individual soul (man, for instance) forgetting his real nature that he is the transcendental soul falsely imagines that he is *Buddhi*, the individualistic form of *Mahat*, and all that its evolutes are. It may be noted here that the individual soul, whether *Hiraṇya-garbha* or man, is said to have been created in the sense that being reflection he has to presuppose the existence of *Mahat* or *Buddhi*, on which reflection occurs; and, because *Mahat* or *Buddhi* is a product of the unmanifest (*Avyakta*) therefore the reflection on *Mahat* or *Buddhi* is liable to be called a product. Yet, as the empirical soul (*Hiraṇya-garbha* or man) is none else than the real soul, it is eternal reality. Until the dawning of consciousness, empiricity continues. During creation the reflection is manifest, since *Mahat* is then manifested. During cosmic deluge when *all* dissolves into *Prakṛti* (the unmanifest), *Mahat* still receives the reflection of the great *Puruṣa*, in its causal form (*kāraṇāvastha*). As empiricity is contemporaneous with the state of reflection, empirical life of the individual soul continues even at deluge so that cosmic deluge does not mean emancipation of the individual soul.

Now let us read the implication of the range of empiricity, indicated above. The centre of this empiricity is the knowledge of the subject as the object—of the real "I" (*Ātman*) as the counterfeit or empirical "I" (*aham*).⁸³ In the light of the reflection-theory the knowledge of counterfeit "I" is a state of the inner mechanism (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) and it follows the state of reflection of the soul on the same. As the *Bhāgavata* calls the state of reflection *Citta* (or *Mahat*) and the knowledge of "I" *Ahaṁkāra*, it legitimately describes *Ahaṁkāra* to have evolved from *Citta* or *Mahat*. The *Bhāgavata* states⁸⁴ that the

⁸³ *nāyaṁ veda svam ātmānam yac-chaktyā'haṁ-dhiyā hatam..* 8.3.29ab

⁸⁴ *aham-ityanyathā-buddhir pramattasya yathā hṛdi.
utsarpati rajo ghoram tato vaikārikam manah..
rajo-yuktasya manasaḥ saṁkalpaḥ sa-vikalpakah.
tataḥ kāmo guṇa-dhyānād duḥ-sahaḥ syād dhi dur-mateḥ..
karoti kāma-vaśa-gaḥ karmānyavijitendriyaḥ.
duḥkhodarkāpi saṁpadyan rajo-vega-vimohitah..* 11.13.9-11
vide also 4.22.30-31

knowledge of "I" provokes *rajas* in the inner mechanism and as a result⁸⁵ the latter concentrates (*saṁkalpa*) on the objective world and indulges thereafter in speculations (*vikalpa*). The state of *saṁkalpa* is *Buddhi* and that of *vikalpa* is *Manas*.⁸⁶ The *Bhāgavata* concept of the inner mechanism is to be understood as consisting of these four successive states: the state of reflection, the state of "I"-consciousness, concentration on worldly objects and indulgence in material speculations. In terms of categories the first is called *Mahat* or *Buddhi*, the second *Ahaṁkāra*, the third and the fourth combined into a single category called *Manas*. Worldly speculations are concretized into definite desires (*kāma*) which for their fulfilment involve the empirical soul in all sorts of actions (*Karman*). *Karman* determines the nature of different bodies to which the empirical soul transmigrates for enjoying the fruits thereof.⁸⁷ A scrutiny into the nature of enjoyment will unravel the relentless story of sorrows, inexhaustible in variety and forms, ceaselessly eating into the vitals of the empirical soul, no matter however divine such soul may possibly be.⁸⁸

The instrument through which the empiricity of the soul is actualised in the shape of pleasure and pain deserves some consideration here. "I"-consciousness (*ahaṁ-dhī*), the centre of empiricity, stands for the superimposition of the non-soul on the soul, brought about by *Avidyā*.⁸⁹ "I", as we have seen, is *Ahaṁkāra* (egoity); and, according to the scheme of the *Bhāgavata*, *Ahaṁkāra* evolves into mind, five sense organs, five action organs and five subtle elements—sixteen in all. As there is identity between the material cause and its effects, *Ahaṁkāra* may be said to have distributed itself in sixteen forms. As the non-soul means this "I", the superimposition of

⁸⁵ *buddhi-bhramāṣo rajo-guṇaḥ*.. 10.10.8b

⁸⁶ *manah sṛjati vai dehān guṇān karmāṇi cātmanah.*
tan manah sṛjate māyā tato jīvasya saṁsṛtiḥ.. 12.5.6

⁸⁷ *labhvā nimittam avyaktaṁ vyaktāvyaktaṁ bhavatyuta.*
yathā-yoni yathā-bījaṁ svabhāvena baliyasā.. 6.1.54

⁸⁸ *ahnyāpṛtārtta-karaṇā nīti niḥ-sayānā*
nānā-mano-ratha-dhīyā kṣaṇa-bhagna-nidrāḥ.
daivāhatārtha-racanā ṛṣayo'pi deva
yusmat-prasaṅga-vimukhā iha saṁsaranti..

3.9.10, vide also 3.30-31, 5.13.2-10

⁸⁹ *ajñāna-prabhavā'haṁ-dhīḥ*. 10.4.26c

the sixteenfold "I" on the soul gives rise to the concept of "ṣoḍaśa-kala puruṣa". In the exposition of the view that recognises seventeen categories, the *Bhāgavata* takes the soul to be the seventeenth category besides these sixteen.⁹⁰ The mind reaches the fivefold external object through the five sense organs and the five action organs; and, the soul derives pleasure and pain therefrom through its association with the mind.⁹¹ This sixteenfold "I" serving as the coil round the soul is called body (*deha*)⁹² and the soul runs the whole gamut of pleasure, pain and all sorts of feelings that impinge themselves upon it (soul) by virtue of its (I's) tremendous (*mahat*) force consisting of the three *guṇas*.⁹³ "I" is called "*liṅga*" (sign)⁹⁴ because, according to the *Bhāgavata*, the diverse activities of the organs including the mind point to the unity called *Ahaṁkāra* which, in its turn, signifies the soul, just as the radiation-sun on the wall points to the reflection-sun in water, which, in its turn, signifies the real sun in the sky.⁹⁵ This "I", *liṅga* or subtle body has been described as the wheel (*cakra*) of the Great *Puruṣa* (*aja*)⁹⁶ and the distribution of *Ahaṁkāra* into sixteen forms is taken to stand for the sixteen spokes geared to this wheel.⁹⁷ The *Bhāgavata* takes *Jīva* to consist in the reflection (*cid-ābhāsa*) associated with the sixteenfold "I",⁹⁸ and, if we

⁹⁰ *saṁ-khyāne sapta-dāśake bhūtamātrendriyāṇi ca pañca pañcaika-manasā ātmā sapta-dāśa smṛtaḥ*.. 11.22.22

⁹¹ *pañcabhiḥ kurute svārthān pañca vedātha pañcabhiḥ. ekas tu ṣoḍaśena trīn svayam sapta-dāśo'lnute*.. 6.1.50

⁹² *bhūtendriya-mano-liṅgān dehān uccāvacaṇ* 7.2.46

⁹³ *tad etat ṣoḍaśa-kalām liṅgam śakti-trayaṁ mahat. dhatte'nu-saṁsṛtiṁ puṁsi harṣa-śoka-bhayaṛtti-dām*.. 6.1.51

⁹⁴ *liṅgam vyapohet kulalo'haṁ-ākhyam*.. 5.5.13d

⁹⁵ *yathā jala-stha ābhāsaḥ sthala-sthenā'vadṛśyate. svābhāśena tathā sūryo jala-sthena divi sthitaḥ. evaṁ tri-vṛt ahaṁkāro bhūtendriya-mano-mayaḥ. svābhāśair lakṣito'nena sadābhāśena satya-dṛk*.. 3.27.12-13

⁹⁶ *ajasya cakram tvajayeryamāṇam mano-mayaṁ pañca-dalāram ātu. tri-nābhi vidyuc-calam aṣṭa-nemi yad akṣam āhus tam ṛtām prapadye*.. 8.5.28

⁹⁷ *chando-mayaṁ yad ajayārṇvita-ṣoḍaśāram saṁsāra-cakram aja ko'titaret tvad-anyaḥ*.. 7.9.21cd

⁹⁸ *evaṁ pañca-vidhaṁ liṅgam tri-vṛt ṣoḍaśa-vistṛtām. eṣa cetanayā yukto jīva ityabhidhīyate* 4.29.74

vide also 4.20.12, 3.31.14

take into consideration the dormant state of *Jīva* even at deluge when *Mahat* exists in *Prakṛti* in causal form, the concept of *Jīva* should include the association of *Prakṛti* or *Pradhāna* as well.⁹⁹ If, on the other hand, we take the term "*Jīva*" to mean the soul then because of its false association with *Mahat* etc. *Jīva* is said to acquire the designation of *Sūtra*, *Mahat* etc.¹⁰⁰

The subtle body stores all worldly experiences of *Jīva* in the shape of subliminal tendencies (*kāma*) rightly described as "*hṛdaya-granthi*", knots of the inner mechanism.¹⁰¹ As insatiable¹⁰² and ever-growing lust,¹⁰³ *kāma* robs the balance of the mind which then is enslaved to the natural propensities of the organs.¹⁰⁴ The surrender of judgment to the dictates of instinct gives rise to the sense of possession (*mamatva*). Round the centre of the gross physical form is knit an immediate environment, the family.¹⁰⁵ Closely connected with "I", the subtle body, this circle with gross body as the centre and worldly possessions as the circumference may be called "mine". For the welfare of this "mine" *Jīva* resorts to all sorts of actions. As marriage is the starting point of this 'mine' it is said to be the knot of mind.¹⁰⁶ Like the silk-worm encased in its own cobweb, *Jīva* invites its own death by means of *Karman*¹⁰⁷ which inevitably provides for the encasement of *Jīva* in gross physical

⁹⁹ *bhūtendriyāntaḥ-karṇāt pradhānāḥ jīva-saṁjñitāt.
ātma tathā prthag draṣṭā bhagavān brahma-saṁjñitah..* 3.28.41

¹⁰⁰ *sattvaṁ rajasaṁ tama itī tri-vid ekam ādau
sūtram mahān aham itī pravādanti jīvaṁ..*
11.3.37ab, vide also 11.28.16

¹⁰¹ *bhṛtya-lakṣaṇa-jijñāsur bhaktāṁ kāmēsvacodayat.
bhāvān saṁsāra-bijeṣu hṛdaya-granthiṣu prabho..* 7.10.3

¹⁰² *na jātu kāmāḥ kāmānām upabhogena sāmyati.
haviṣā kṛpā-vartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate..* 9.19.14

¹⁰³ *yāvanto viṣayāḥ preṣṭhās trilokyām ajitendriyam.
na śaknuvanti te sarve pratipūrayitum nṛpa..* 8.19.21

¹⁰⁴ *noṣahe'haṁ kṛpā-dhīḥ kāma-karma-hataṁ manah.
roddhum pramāthibhiḥ cākṣair hriyamāṇam itas-tataḥ..* 10.40.27

¹⁰⁵ *neha cā'tyanta-saṁśāsaḥ kasyacit kenacit saha.
rājan svenāpi dehena kimu jāyātmajādibhiḥ..* 10.49.20

¹⁰⁶ *puṁsaḥ striyā mithunī-bhāvām etaṁ
taylor mitho hṛdaya-granthim āhuḥ.
ato gṛha-kṣetra-sutāpta-vittair
janasya moho'yam ahaṁ-mameti..* 5.5.8 vide also 4.29.53-54

¹⁰⁷ *dehyajño'jīta-śaḍ-vargo necchan karmāṇi kāryate.
kṛta-kāra ivātmānam karmaṇā'cchādyā muhyati..* 6.1.52

forms.¹⁰⁸ Such confinement leads to the concept of "saṁsāra". According to the *Bhāgavata*, "saṁsāra" is a complex situation for the empirical soul. The *Bhāgavata* compares it with a lamp (*dīpa*) with *Karman* as the oil (*taila*), the mind as the reservoir of oil (*tailādhāra*), the body as the wick (*vartti*), the empirical soul as fire (*agni-samyoga*) and the flame (*dīpa*) as the ultimate result.¹⁰⁹ The gist of the analogy is that the empirical soul feeds on *Karman* resting in the mind and associated with the gross body; and, such feeding on becomes actualised when *Karman* finds fruition in the gross body in the shape of pleasure and pain. So, revolving in the wheel of "saṁsāra" the empirical soul is subjected to the continuous process of pleasure and pain.¹¹⁰ The further analogy of "saṁsāra" with a tree,¹¹¹ suggests that both the types of bodies, the gross and the subtle, become involved in this process of "saṁsāra" i.e., the enjoyment of happiness and sorrow.

The crux of this "saṁsāra" is the subtle body. As long as a particular gross body continues to exist, the subtle body, encased within the gross body, provides for the three states of the empirical soul—the waking, the dream and the dreamless sleep.¹¹² In the waking state the external sense organs operate and the mind contacts external objects through them. In dream mind alone functions. But even in dreamless sleep mind (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) does exist in the form of its material cause (*Prakṛti*). The existence of mind even in dreamless sleep explains recollection of happiness on the part of the empirical soul when the latter comes back to the waking state. How could

¹⁰⁸ *ataḥ kāyam imaṁ vidvān avidyā-kāma-karmabhiḥ.*
ārabdha itī naivāsmiṁ pratibuddho'nuṣajjate.. 4.20.5

¹⁰⁹ *snehādhiṣṭhāna-varttyagni-samyogo yāvad iyate.*
tāvad dīpasya dīpatvam evaṁ deha-kṛto bhavaḥ.. 12.5.7 abcd

¹¹⁰ *saṁsāra-cakra etasmiṁ jantur ajñāna-mohitaḥ.*
bhṛāmyan sukhaṁ ca duḥkhaṁ ca bhunkte sarvatra sarvadā.. 6.17.18

¹¹¹ *ya sminn idaṁ protam aśeṣam otaṁ*
paśo yathā tantu-vitāna-saṁsthaḥ.
ya eṣa saṁsāra-taruḥ purāṇaḥ
karmātmakaḥ puṣpa-phale prasūte..
dve asya bīje lata-mūlas tri-nālaḥ
pañca-skandhaḥ pañca-rasa-prasūtiḥ.
daśaika-śākhā dvi-suparṇa-niḍas
tri-valkalo dvi-phalo'rkam pravṛttaḥ.. 11.12.21-22; also 10.2.27

¹¹² *jāgrat swapnaḥ suṣuptaṁ ca guṇato buddhi-vṛttayaḥ..* 11.13.27ab

the mind reproduce the experience of happiness unless it existed in dreamless sleep to register that experience? The *Bhāgavata* therefore says that although in dreamless sleep "I" seems to be non-existent yet even then "I" has to be admitted to explain recollection.¹¹³ With the cessation of that particular gross body the subtle body does not cease to exist but casts away this gross body in favour of a new one to which it then transmigrates for the purpose of fruition of the residuary actions inhering in the inner mechanism. In fact, immediately before death some specific actions ripen and they determine the nature of the next birth. Such actions operate upon the material nucleus, (the subtle elements), that forms a part of the subtle body, as we have already seen. As a result, the subtle elements evolve into the five gross elements that build up the gross body. The subtle elements then not only serve as the ground of the organs and the inner mechanism which, being extra-elemental (*a-dravya*), do require such a material ground to subsist in, but they also provide materials for the creation of the gross body. The soul follows this subtle body in its transmigration,¹¹⁴ due to the fact that superimposition (*sāmya*) of the subtle body on the soul has obliterated the sense of its separate existence.¹¹⁵ Death of the particular gross body casts a veil over the past;¹¹⁶ and so, in spite of the continuity of the subtle body beyond that particular gross body, it is not felt as such.¹¹⁷ As long as this subtle

¹¹³ *aṇḍeṣu peṣiṣu taruṣvavinīṣciteṣu*
prāṇo hi jīvam upadhāṇvati tatra tatra
saṇne yad indriya-gaṇe'hami ca prasupte
kūṣastha āśayam ṛte tad anu-smṛtir naḥ.. 11.3.39

¹¹⁴ *yato yato dhāṇvati daiva-coditam*
mano vikārātmakam āpa pañcasu.
guṇeṣu māyā-raciteṣu dehyasau
prapadyamānaḥ sa ha tena jāyate.. 10.1.42 vide also 11.22.37

¹¹⁵ *evam guṇair bhrāmyamāṇe manasyavikalāḥ pumān.*
yāti tat-sāmyatām bhadre hyaliṅgo liṅgavān iva.. 7.2.24

¹¹⁶ *svapne yathā paśyati deham idṛśam*
manorathenābhiniṣṭa-cetanaḥ.
dr̥ṣṭa-śrutābhyām manasānucintayan
prapadyate tat kim api hyaśmṛtiḥ.. 10.1.41

¹¹⁷ *nāham-mameti bhāvo'yaṁ puruṣe vyavadhīyate.*
yāvad buddhi-mano'kṣārtha-guṇa-vyūho hyanādimān..
suptir mūrceḥopatāpeṣu prāṇāyana-vighātataḥ.
nehate'ham-iti jñānam mṛtyu-prajvārayor api..
garbhe bālye'pyapauṣkalyād ekādaśa-vidham tadā.
liṅgam na dr̥śyate yūnaḥ kuvvām candramaso yathā.. 4.29.70-72

body continues to exist the empirical soul indulges in fresh actions in fresh gross bodies¹¹⁸ and these actions constitute new stock in the mind, providing for fresh inroad to other gross bodies, high and low. Thus the empirical life of the soul maintains unbroken continuity.

Yet, empirical life is not the inevitable destiny of the soul. As we have already seen, *Jiva per se* is the soul and as such is unpolluted with empirical life. *Jiva per se* is the witness of the three states of the mind and does not form a part of worldliness.¹¹⁹ Empirical life, as we have seen that as well, is derived from *Avidyā*.¹²⁰ In fact, *Māyā*, as *Prakṛti*, creates the world of cognition, while, as *Avidyā*, veils the true nature of the soul and falsely ascribes this created world to the soul. This superimposition of the non-soul upon the soul, represented by "I"-consciousness is the root of empirical life. A close scrutiny of the non-soul will expose that the non-soul is as false as superimposition itself.

The *Bhāgavata* takes the appearance of the world in the soul as a case of "*vaiḷakṣika bhrama*" i.e., illusion resulting in difference (*vikalpa*).¹²¹ The world of difference appearing against the non-dual reality of the soul, the pure consciousness, is a figment of imagination,¹²² a dream,¹²³ an operation of the fire-brand (*alāta-cakra*),¹²⁴ an imaginary town in the sky¹²⁵ or

¹¹⁸ yāval liṅgānvito hyātmā tāvat karma nibandhanam.
tato viparyayaḥ kleśo māyā-yogo'nuvartate.. 7.2.47

¹¹⁹ kṣetra-jña etā manaso vibhūtiḥ
jīvasya māyā-racitasya nityāḥ.
āvīr-hitāḥ kvāpi tirohitaś ca
luddho vicaṣṭe hyaviluddha-kartuḥ.. 5.11.12

¹²⁰ saṁsāras tamaśaḥ kṛtaḥ.. 11.23.59 d

¹²¹ evaṁ anvikṣamānasya katham vaikalpiko bhramah.
manaso hṛdi tiṣṭheta vyomnīvārṇodaye tamaḥ.. 11.24.28

¹²² tasmāl lokam imaṁ rājan svapna-māyā-mano-ratham.
vikṣya..... 10.49.25

¹²³ yenendriyārthān dhyāyeta myā svapnavad utthitāḥ.
tan nirundhyād indriyāṇi vinidraḥ pratyapadyata.. 10.47.32

¹²⁴ ikṣeta vibhramam idaṁ manaso vilāsaṁ
dṛṣṭaṁ vinaṣṭam ati-lolam alāta-cakram.
vijñānam ekam urudheva vibhāti māyā
svapnaś tridhā guṇa-visarga-kṛto vikalpaḥ.. 11.13.34

¹²⁵ yo māyayā viracitaṁ nijayā'tmanīdam
khe rūpa-bhedam iva.. 4.1.55 ab

a mirage.¹²⁶ This description applies to all external objects. In fact, all *Sāṃkhya* categories, subtle and gross, offer the illustration of a gigantic illusion against the non-dual reality of the Absolute.¹²⁷ True, that the world appears before our ordinary experience but still it is illusory in the sense that it has no reality of its own.¹²⁸ It appears to be real and is even capable of performing practical utility¹²⁹ only because it has borrowed the reality of the soul against which it appears.¹³⁰ Had the world had intrinsic reality it would have been as self-revealing as the soul itself.¹³¹ Like a piece of cloud appearing and disappearing against the sky, the world appears against the soul and is again negated against the same.¹³² The world with such transient existence can by no means be called to be real. It is therefore hopeless to think the world of three *guṇas* as real.¹³³

The examination of the nature of the world of difference will bear this point out. Creation, both in its cosmic aspect (i.e., as Nature), and in its individualistic aspect (i.e., as the individual body), is said to be a composition (*saṃghāta*).¹³⁴ Such composition cannot be just a collocation of parts; for then, removal of that composition by catching hold

¹²⁶ *etat padam taj jagad-ātmanah param
sakṛd vibhātam savitur yathā prabhā.* 4.31.16 ab

¹²⁷ *aham payo jyotir athānilo nabho
mātrāṇi devā mana indriyāṇi ca.
kartā mahān ityakhilam carācaram
tvayyadvītiye bhagavan ayaṁ bhramah..* 10.59.30

¹²⁸ *arthe hyavidyamāne'pi saṃsṛtir na nivartate.
dhyāyato viśayān asya svapne'narthāgamo yathā..* 11.22.56
vide also 3.7.18

¹²⁹ *yathā'satodānayanādya bhāvāt
sa-mūla iṣṭo vyavahāra-mārgah..* 5.10.21 cd

¹³⁰ *ya ātmano dṛiṣya-guṇeṣu sanā iti
vyavasyate sa-vyatirekato'budhah.
vinānuvādam na ca tan manīṣitam
samyag yatas tyaktam upādadat pumān..* 10.3.18 vide also 10.70.38

¹³¹ *vikārah khyāyamāno'pi pratyaḡ-ātmānam antarā.
na nirūpyo'styaṇur api syāc cec cit-sama ātmavat..* 12.4.29

¹³² *yaṣminn idam viracitam vyomnīva jaladāvalih.
nāneva bhāti nābhāti svapna-māyā-mano-rathah..* 9.18.49
vide also 6.15.24, 7.15.58

¹³³ *idam śarīram puruṣasya moha-jam
yathā pṛthag bhautikam iyate gṛham.
yathodakaiḥ pāṛthiva-taijasair janah.
kālena jāto vikṛto vināśyati..* 7.2.42

¹³⁴ *dehas tu sarva-saṃghāto jagat tasthur iti dvidhā.* 7.7.23 ab

of a part would be impossible. But the fact is that we do remove, say, the pitcher by holding it at one corner. It cannot be said that the pitcher is not just the collocation of parts but a whole (*avayavin*) brought about by the parts. For then, is this whole, brought about by the parts, a completely distinct reality not connected with parts? But this possibility is negated by actual experience. Then, is it related to the parts? If it is, does it subsist in each part? If it does, knowledge of a finger would mean the knowledge of the body. If, on the other hand, the whole is said to inhere partially in a part, then another set of parts has to be recognised to justify such existence of the whole in each part. So, the whole can neither be said to be unrelated nor related to its parts. So the whole is a mere appearance without any substance. The same arguments may be pressed forward to the parts and their parts and so on until we reach the base i.e., the five subtle elements.¹²⁵ But even the subtle elements cannot be considered as ultimate because, according to the scheme of the *Bhāgavata*, they are created out of the inner mechanism which, in its turn, is created by *Avidyā* (*Māyā*). Finally, *Māyā* is traced to the ultimate truth, the soul.¹²⁶

The *Bhāgavata* adduces supplementary arguments to establish unreality of creation: The experience of the effect does not stand without the support of its material cause. But the material cause can be understood without any reference to its effect. This means that the effect has no existence apart

¹²⁵ *kṣitādīnām ihārthānām chāyā na katamā'pi hi.
na saṁghāto vikāro'pi na prīthan nānvito mṣā.
dhātavo'vayavītvāc ca tan-mātrāvayavair vind.
na syur hyasatyavayavinyasann avayavo'ntataḥ..* 7.15.59-60

¹²⁶ *yadā kṣitāveva carācarasya
vidāma nityhām prabhavañ ca nityam.
tan nāmato'nyad vyavahāra-mūlañ
nirūpyatām sat kriyāyānumeyam..
evam niruktañ kṣiti-labha-vṛttam
a-sannidhānāt paramāṇavo ye.
avidyayā manasi kalpitās te
yejām samūhena kṛto vīśeṣaḥ..
evam kṛtañ sthūlam aṇur bṛhad yad
asac ca saḥ jīvam ajīvam anyat.
draṇya-svabhāvāśaya-kāla-karma
nāmnā'jayā'vehi kṛtañ dvitīyam..
jñānañ viśuddhañ paramārtham ekam..* 5.12.8-11a,

vide also 5.18.32-33

from its material cause.¹³⁷ Duality, presented to the knowledge in terms of substance and its qualities, is false like the duality presented in the same way in dream.¹³⁸ Truth is *one* and so duality is bound to be false, just as the duality of the sun when reflected in water is false.¹³⁹ So, just as gold assumes different names and forms though it remains always the same substance, so the soul continues to be one and the same in spite of diversity of names and forms.¹⁴⁰

It may be argued that the world originating from the soul, which is real, is bound to be real because there should be homogeneity between the cause and the effect. It may be answered that there is no homogeneity between the stick (*daṇḍa*) and the pot (*ghaṭa*), if by 'homogeneity' is meant the sharing of the same nature. If such homogeneity is confined to the material cause and its effect, yet this conclusion is falsified in the case of a snake originating from a piece of rope and presenting itself in the consciousness of an erring person. If it be said that a piece of rope does not by itself produce the snake but as attended with the ignorance on the part of the erring person, then the same logic may be applied to show that the soul attended with *Māyā* produces the world.¹⁴¹ The world did not exist at the outset and it will not do so also at deluge. It appears only at the intermediate stage. So, like gold enduring through its perishing forms, the soul is the only reality while the world is a passing show.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ *satyaṁ hyavayavaḥ proktaḥ sarvāṅvayavinām iha.
vinā'rthena pratiyeran paśasyevāṅga tantavaḥ..* 12.4.27

¹³⁸ *yat sāmānya-viśeṣābhyām upalabhyeta sa bhramah.
anyonyāpāśrayāt sarvaṁ ādyantavat a-vastu yat..* 12.4.28

¹³⁹ *na hi satyasya nānātvaṁ aviduān yaḍi manyate.
nānātvaṁ chidrayor yadvaj jyotiḥor vā tayor iva..* 12.4.30

¹⁴⁰ *yathā hiraṇyaṁ bahudhā samiyate
nybhīḥ kriyābhir vyavahāra-varṇmasu
evaṁ vacobhir bhagavān adhokṣajo
vyākhyāyate laukika-vaidikair janaiḥ..* 12.4.31

¹⁴¹ *sata idam utthitaṁ sad iti cen nanu tarka-hataṁ
vyabhicarati kva ca kva ca mṛṣā na tathobhaya-yuk.
vyavahṛtaye vikalpa iṣṭo'ndha-paramparayā
bhramayati bhārati ta uru-vṛttibhir uktha-jāḍān..* 10.87.36

¹⁴² *na yaḍ idam agra āsa na bhaviṣyad ato nidhanād
anumitam antarā tvayi vibhāti mṛṣaikarase.
ata upamiyate draviṇa-jāti-vikalpa-pathair
vilātha-mano-vilāsam ṛtam ityavayantyabudhāḥ..* 10.87.37

The arguments mentioned above reduce the world to mere names and forms vouchsafed by uncritical tradition, a creation of mind (inner mechanism). This view of the world consisting in names and forms as the creation of the inner mechanism is fundamentally based on the *Upaniṣadic* thought and the *Bhāgavata* seems to have imbued it with a new significance. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*¹⁴³ describes the intention of the supreme Deity (the soul) at the beginning of creation as follows:—"anena jīvena ātmanā'nupraviśya nāma-rūpe vyākaravāṇi—I shall manifest the names and forms through this *Jīva* who partakes of my nature (*svarūpa*)". The original *Jīva*, as the *Rg-Veda* tells us,¹⁴⁴ is *Hiraṇya-garbha* and, according to the scheme of the *Bhāgavata*, *Hiraṇya-garbha* embodies *Mahat*, the first manifest principle to evolve from *Prakṛti*, the unmanifest. All forms, from *Ahaṁkāra* down to the fourteen planes of existence, are manifested from *Mahat*. In so far as *Hiraṇya-garbha* is the conscious principle behind *Mahat*, apparently all forms are his creations. When therefore creation is described as the figment of imagination the statement means, in the light of the *Bhāgavata*, that creation emerged from *Mahat*, the mind of *Hiraṇya-garbha*. In this context it may be mentioned that *Hiraṇya-garbha*, in the first of the *kalpas*, assumed the name of "*Śabda-Brahman*" and the *kalpa* is called "*Brāhma-kalpa*" after the name of *Brahmā*.¹⁴⁵ The *Bhāgavata* recognises that this "*Śabda-Brahman*" and its prototype, "*Para-Brahman*" are but the two forms of the soul, *Śabda-Brahman* being the reflection of *Para-Brahman* on *Mahat*.¹⁴⁶ The origin of sound that constitutes name, the other aspect of the world, is also closely connected with "*Śabda-Brahman*".

The *Bhāgavata* expounds the doctrine of the origin of sounds in the following way:—*Brahman*, with its mysterious power of diversity, created the first principle. As a form of matter, it is called *Mahat* and as the vital breath, it is called *Mukhya Prāṇa* or simply *Prāṇa*. The nucleus of sound called

¹⁴³ Ch. U 6.3.2

¹⁴⁴ RV 10.121.1

¹⁴⁵ *pūrvasyādau parārdhasya brāhma nāma mahān. abhūt. kalpo yatrābhavad brahmā śabda-brahmeti yaṁ viduḥ..* 3.11.35

¹⁴⁶ *aham vai sarva-bhūtāni bhūtātma bhūta-bhāvanah. śabda-brahma param brahma mamobhe śātvati tanū..* 6.16.51

"ghoṣa" was constituted by *Prāṇa*. From "ghoṣa" emerged "nāda", from that "bindu", from that "om", the trinity of three sounds, from that the whole series of vowels and consonants and from that language and different *Vedic* metres. Then originated the *Vedas* and then later literature. The mechanisms involved in the different stages through which the primordial sound (*ghoṣa*) had to pass before it finally found expression as audible sound are: (1) *Prāṇa*, (2) *Manas* and (3) *Vāg-in-driya* (*prāṇendriya-manomaya*). In *Prāṇa*, sound stays in the shape of consciousness of the object; in *Manas* it crystallizes into a concept or idea which, through the organ of speech, is finally communicated in the shape of audible sound.¹⁴⁷ The same doctrine may be briefly stated as follows:—God gave wisdom to *Brahmā*¹⁴⁸ and it took the shape of "om". Out of "om" emerged the storehouse of wisdom, the four *Vedas*. Helped by this wisdom *Brahmā* created the fourteen planes of existence.¹⁴⁹ As the attainment of wisdom involved long long time *Brahmā* now entered another *kalpa* called "*Pādma*" because he now found himself as *Hiraṇya-garbha* seated on the golden lotus.¹⁵⁰

The *Bhāgavata* here records the illustrious doctrine of

¹⁴⁷ *śabda-brahma su-dur-bodham prāṇendriya-mano-mayam. ananta-pāram gambhīram dur-vigāhyam samudravat. māyopabīṃhitam bhūmnā brahmaṇā nanta-śaktinā. bhūteṣu ghoṣa-rūpeṇa viśeṣūrṇeva lakṣyate. yathorṇa-nābhīr hṛdayād ūrṇām ud-vamate mukhāt. ākāśād ghoṣavān prāṇo manasā sparśa-rūpiṇā. chando-mayo'mṛta-mayaḥ sahasra-padavīm prabhuḥ. omkārād vyañjita-sparśa-svaro'māntaḥstha-bhūṣitām. vicitra-bhāṣā-vitatām chandobhīr catur-uttaraiḥ. ananta-pāram bṛhatīm śṛjatyākṣipati svayam. gāyatriyugṇig anuṣṭup ca bṛhatī pañktir eva ca. triṣṭub jagatyaticchando hyatyasṛjyati-jagad virāṭ. 11.21.36-41 vācām varṇa-samāmnāye tam omkāre svare nyaset omkāram bindau nāde tam tan tu prāṇe mahatyamum. 7.15.53; vide also 11.12.17-18*

¹⁴⁸ *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye 1.1.1 b*

¹⁴⁹ *śabda-brahmā'tmanas tasya vyaktāvyaktātmanah paraḥ. brahmāvabhāti vitato nānā-śaktyupabīṃhitah. tato'parām upādāya sa sargāya mano dadhe. 3.12.47, 48 ab. Śrīdhara comments:—vyaktā=vaikharī; avyaktā=praṇavaḥ; tad-ātmanas = tasya brahmaṇah; paraḥ = paramēśvaraḥ avabhāti. He further says: tato'parām=a-niṣiddha-kāmāśaktām tanum; śabda-brahma-tanum tu sadā'sti eva.*

¹⁵⁰ *tasyaivānte ca kalpo'bhūd yaṁ pādmam abhicakṣate. yad dharer nābhī-sarasa āsil loka-saro-ruham. 3.11.36*

fourfold speech, propounded by the *Rg-Veda*¹⁵¹ and confirmed by the *Atharva-Veda*, the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, the *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*¹⁵² and so on and sometimes associated with a similar conception first propounded by the *Rg-Veda*.¹⁵³ Both the passages have been quoted by the *Nirukta*¹⁵⁴ and the *Mahā-bhāṣya*.¹⁵⁵ The doctrine is later on associated with mysticism and the *Bhāgavata* calls it to be an obscure doctrine. *Pāṇinīya-Śikṣā* presents it in a sensible form: Before making a speech, the speaker first visions an experience; then he ponders over it so that it crystallizes into clear concepts; then he engages his organ of speech to give utterance to his ideas or concepts. As a result, we hear sound from the speaker.¹⁵⁶

The philosophical implication of this doctrine is that sound and sense are the two aspects of the same reality as we can see from the first principle which, as sense, is *Mahat*; and, as sound, is *Prāṇa*. And, as creation is the evolution of *Mahat*, the same conclusion holds true in every detail of creation. If we substitute the words "names and forms" for sound and sense we go back to the position of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* that creation consists in names and forms. If we transcend such tangible creation we get to the soul which, then, as distinguished from creation, is nameless, intangible and formless.¹⁵⁷

Another question should engage our attention in this context. The *Bhāgavata* describes that the original sound (*ghoṣa*) which *Prāṇa* represents, is from *Ākāśa*.¹⁵⁸ The *Bhāgavata* recognises elsewhere¹⁵⁹ the origin of *Mahat* from *Ākāśa*. This seems to be in direct conflict with the view hitherto expressed

¹⁵¹ *catvāri vāk parimitā padāni* etc. RV 1.16.45

¹⁵² AV 9.10.27; SB 4.1.3.17; TB 2.8.8.5

¹⁵³ *catvāri śrīgā trayo asya pādāḥ* etc. RV 4.58.3

¹⁵⁴ *Nirukta* 13.9; *ibid* 13.7

¹⁵⁵ *Mahā-bhāṣya—Paśpaṭā*

¹⁵⁶ *ātma buddhyā sametyārthān mano yunkte vivakṣayā. manaḥ kāyāgnim āhanti sa prerayati mārutam. mārutas tūrasī caran mandraṁ janayati svaram. sodiṛṇo mūrdhnyabhihato vaktraṁ āpādyā mārutaḥ. varṇān janayate.* *Pāṇinīya Śikṣā* verses 6, 7 and 9.

¹⁵⁷ *a-śabdān a-sparśān a-rūpān* etc. KaṭU 1.3.15

¹⁵⁸ *ākāśād ghoṣavān prāṇaḥ* 11.21.38 c

¹⁵⁹ *antaḥ-śarīra ākāśāt puruṣasya viceṣṭataḥ. ojaḥ saho balam jājñe tataḥ prāṇo mahān asuḥ..* 2.10.15

that *Ākāśa*, even as a subtle element, is derived from *Ahaṁkāra* which, in its turn, originates from *Mahat*. How to reconcile these two views? Śrīdhara has anticipated this apparent inconsistency and suggests the following solution: The five elements in their *loose* state create the subtle categories: but while they undergo the process of quintuplication (*pañcīkaraṇa*) they create the gross universe. Thus one can reconcile the two theories of creation, one propounded by the *Vedānta* School and the other by the *Sāṁkhya* School.¹⁶⁰ The theory of Śrīdhara is interesting and deserves careful consideration.

The world being thus reduced to mere appearance of names and forms, encasement of the soul in subtle and gross bodies is no exception to it. A real association implies the reality of both the associates. But the world being unreal how can there be real association between the soul and the world, the real and the unreal?¹⁶¹ And as empiricity of the soul is based upon *such* association between the soul and the non-soul, birth is like a dream and transmigration is like assuming many bodies in dream.¹⁶² The threefold experiences of the threefold states, the waking, the dream and the dreamless sleep, are thus imaginary and the transcendental nature of the soul is unpoluted by them.¹⁶³ The experience of the physical attributes is comparable to the experience in dream. Body itself being illusory the as-

¹⁶⁰ On 11.24.7 Śrīdhara comments:—*yadyapi "tasmād vā etasmād ātmāna ākāśa sambhūta" ityādi-śruter, "annamayam hi saumya mana" ityādi-śruteś ca, prathamam bhūtāni jāyante, tebhyaś ca a-pañci-kṛtebhyaś prānādi-krameṇa samastyaत्मakam līṅga-sarīram, pañcikṛtebhyaś ca brahmāṇḍam, tasmin vairājas tad-antar-yāmi līlā-vigrahaś kṣīrābhi-tāyi śrī-nārāyaṇas, tan-nābhi-padme ca vairājasya bhoga-vigrahaś catur-ānanaś, tato yathā vasaram anyeśāṁ jivānām āvirbhāva iti prakriyā, tathā'pi cittābhivyakti-pūrvako'ham-kāras, tato bhūtendriyādi-vyavahāra, ityetāvatā mahad-ādi-krameṇa sṛjīr ucyate.*

¹⁶¹ *nā'tmano'nyena saṁ-yogo vi-yogaś cā'sataś sati. tad-dhetutvāt tat-prasiddher dyg-rūpābhyām yathā raveḥ.. 10.54.46*

¹⁶² *yathā śayāna ātmānam viśayān phalam eva ca. anubhunkte'pyasatyarthe tathā'pnotyabudho bhavam.. 10.54.48*

¹⁶³ *buddher jāgarāṇaṁ svapnaś suṣuptir iti vṛttayaś. 7.7.25ab ebhis tri-varṇaiḥ paryastair buddhi-bhedaiḥ kriyodbhavaish. svarūpam ātmano budhyed gandhair vāyum ivānvayāt.. 7.7.26*

cription of its attributes¹⁶⁴ is equally so.¹⁶⁵ The duties of the castes and stages of life, mundane and celestial fruits of action, thus pale into mere appearance having no bearing upon the soul.¹⁶⁶ In fact, the trinity of the enjoyer, the enjoyment and the enjoyable is unreal as in dream.¹⁶⁷ Just as the cloud originating from and revealed by the sun serves as a veil to the eyes which are a part of the sun, similarly "I" is born of and is revealed by *Brahman* and yet it shuts the vision of *Brahman* from the empirical soul which is but a manifestation of *Brahman*.¹⁶⁸ As the sun appears in all its glory when the cloud shifts away so *Brahman* is revealed to the empirical soul with the removal of the veil of *Māyā*.¹⁶⁹ But the veil being unreal there was no real bondage ; and, as there was no real bondage so there is no question of liberation. Bondage and liberation are therefore a couple of dreams.¹⁷⁰ We are therefore left with the soul with its eternal splendour that shines over the shadows of all doubts.

¹⁶⁴ *svapne yathā līlā-chedam pañcatvādyātmanah svayam. yasmāt paśyati dehāsya tata ātmā hyajo'marah.. 12.5.4*

¹⁶⁵ *sthaulyam kārīyam vyādhaya ādhaya ca kṣut-trṣṭ-bhayaṁ kalir icchā jarā ca. nidrā ratir manyur ahaṁ madaḥ lūco dehena jātasya hi me na santi.. 5.10.10*

¹⁶⁶ *a-sattvād ātmano'nyeṣāṁ bhāvānām tat-kṛtā bhidā. gatayo hetavaś cāsyā mṛṣā svapna-dṛṣṭo yathā.. 11.13.31*

¹⁶⁷ *asāvihāṇeka-guṇo'guṇo'dhvaraḥ pṛthag-vidha-dṛavya-guṇa-kriyoktibhiḥ. sampadyate'thāstaya-līṅga-nāmaḥ viśuddha-vijñāna-ghanah svarūpataḥ.. 4.21.34*

¹⁶⁸ *yathā ghano'rka-prabhavo'rka-darlito hyarkāṁśa-bhūtasya ca cakṣuṣas tamaḥ. evaṁ tvahaṁ brāhma-guṇas tad-ikṣito brahmāṁśakasyātmana ātma-bandhanah.. 12.4.32*

¹⁶⁹ *ghano yadā'rka-prabhavo vidīryate cakṣuḥ-svarūpaṁ ravim ikṣate tadā. yadā hyahamkāra upādhir ātmano jñānāsya nātyati tarhyanusmaret.. 12.4.33*

¹⁷⁰ *ātmānam evā'tmatayā'vijñānatām tenaiva jātam nikhīlaṁ prapañcitam. jñānena bhūyo'pi ca tat pralīyate rajjvām aher bhoga-bhavābhavau yathā. ajñāna-samjñau bhava-bandha-mokṣau dvau nāma nānyau sta ṣṭa-jña-bhāvāt. ajasra-cityātmani kevale pare vicāryamāṇe tarapāvivāhani.. 10.14.25-26*

CONCLUSION

So, we have reached the end of the ontological enquiry. In response to the question—"What is the individual soul?"—the *Bhāgavata* has transcended the question itself to find, paradoxically speaking, a suitable answer in the conception of the Ultimate, the non-dual Reality consisting in pure being, pure knowledge and pure bliss. The perspective presented by the *Bhāgavata* now merits reassertion and evaluation.

The *Bhāgavata* has expounded the philosophy of personalism. It commences the ontological enquiry with the individual, the most practical approach from the known to the unknown. Confined to a particular place and time, the individual is a mere point in the vast community of selves, in which he is an indispensable though insignificant link. Spatio-temporal existence in the community of selves, often described as "society", has imposed on the individual unending series of interactions between his own self and other selves in whose society he is placed. These interactions produce in him reactions, adverse or favourable. The ordinary life of the individual is bound up in the chain of reactions described as happiness or sorrow. To ensure a better order of existence or rather peaceful co-existence, the society which means a totality of individuals has tried, ever since the dawn of what is called civilization, to devise certain norms of conduct. These norms, known as values, have changed from time to time to accommodate the needs of man who as dynamic reality has always chosen "pastures anew". So, the norms are not absolute—unchangeable for all times. And, despite these norms which as models of human conduct have lent colour to human history, the instinctive nature of man has always exposed its "teeth and claws behind the sleek exterior" varnished by civilization. The history of man is thus the unending story of stress and strain. Human values that profess to be panacea to all sorts of wrongs are themselves soiled by the personal images of individuals that dabble in them. Accordingly, man worships "the false cult of despiritualized co-operation that cannot for a moment hide con-

flit between various highly organised economic and political interests”.

Challenge of this practical situation evokes the philosophy of personalism. Can there be a spatio-temporal existence in which the individual can discover the thread of unity, in which the fragmentariness and obstinate diversity of ordinary life is transformed into eternal joy and beauty? Such existence need not be negation or exclusion of life but a transcendence that rises above yet includes the given present. In the ordinary life the individual is pledged to activity. To be is to become. In his voluntary effort the individual is governed by knowledge, and pleasure is his goal. One might therefore say that sense of pleasure motivates knowledge which in its turn gives direction to the will to act. And will to act dislodges the individual from his sedentary state of passivity—his bare existence—to the vortex of action. Becoming therefore presupposes three states in hierarchical order: being, knowledge and bliss. Can the individual find his highest fulfilment, by infinite expansion of his basic nature, in a state of existence in which his *becoming* finds harmony with his joyful and conscious *being*? In other words, can the turmoils of present existence be transformed into an instrument of the individual, through which the divine ecstasy of his shining being can find harmonious expression?

The first response to this craving for perfection is embodied in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of the *Ṛg-Veda*; and, the *Bhāgavata* has incorporated it in a form chastened by superb refinement through centuries. The *Bhāgavata* has conceived as the zenith of its ontological exploration the state of absolute non-duality beyond subject-object dichotomy which the dualistic texture of intellect always presupposes. This is the synoptic vision at its climax. Its first condescension to human apprehension is joy (*Bhagavat*), pure and simple, the spontaneous exuberance of its perfection. From inexhaustible joy, complete in all respects and yet perpetually renewing itself in all possible channels, springs life divine (*Paramātman*). It is the first expression of creativity as it is the eternal light that guides creativity in its progressive journey. The spatio-temporal existence of the individual finds its replica in the realm of joyous light (*Goloka*) which, shorn of its pragmatic limitations (*kuṇṭhā*); allows the

freeplay of diversity without the efforts and strains that tend to turn all joy and knowledge on the earth into abject dejection and despair.

The world of plurality, the arena of man's incessant struggle, emerges as a finite expression of the infinite (*ananta*). Life eternal, before it bursts into finitude, has a lull like that of wind before tempest. This is *being* (*sattā*), the presupposition of *becoming*. It is extension pure and simple and so is conceived as massive (*bṛhat*), larger than the largest.¹ Out of this emerges the first mass (*mahat*) representing the divine spirit (*yakṣa*)² in material vesture. The cosmic mind (*hiraṇyagarbha*), the divine spirit in material garb, and taken as a spark of divine life (*Paramātmān*)³ exhibits activity (*kriyā-śakti*) and knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*) like divine life itself. That makes possible the emergence of the subtle and gross worlds.⁴ The sense organs, conative and cognitive, including mind, their organiser, have all sprung from the cosmic mind;⁵ and, five subtle elements, the nucleus of the physical universe, owe their existence to the same.⁶ The subtle elements give rise to gross elements that provide the clay for the structure of the physical universe consisting of the fourteen planes as they are described. But the emergence of life on the planes, consequent upon their

¹ The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* defines "*Brahman*", the pure being, as follows :—*bṛhattvād bṛmhaṇatvāc ca tad brahma iti gīyate* 3.3.22

In the *Vedas* (RV 8.56.5 ; AV 8.8.7) the term "*bṛhat*" means "large" and the *Brāhmaṇa* literature maintains that meaning (e.g., TB 2.4.9.9). Śrīdhara on 2.20.5 interprets "*bṛhat*" as "*Brahman*".

² The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* describes the first born (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) as follows:—*mahad yakṣam prathama-jam veda satyam brahmeti* 5.4.

³ The *Praīna-Upaniṣad* describes "*prāṇa*" (life) to have born directly from *Ātman* : *ātmana eṣa prāṇo jāyate* 3.3

⁴ The *Kaṭha* recognises "*prāṇa*" to be the sustaining principle of creation : *yad idaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ prāṇe ejati niḥsṛtam* 6.2. The *Muṇḍaka* also takes everything the expression of "*prāṇa*" : *prāṇo hyeṣa sa sarva-bhūtaḥ... ātma-kṛdā ātma-ratiḥ* 3.1.4

⁵ The *Muṇḍaka* says:—*etasmād jāyate prāṇaḥ manas sarvendriyāṇi ca kham vāyur jyotir āpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhārīṇi*... 2.2.3

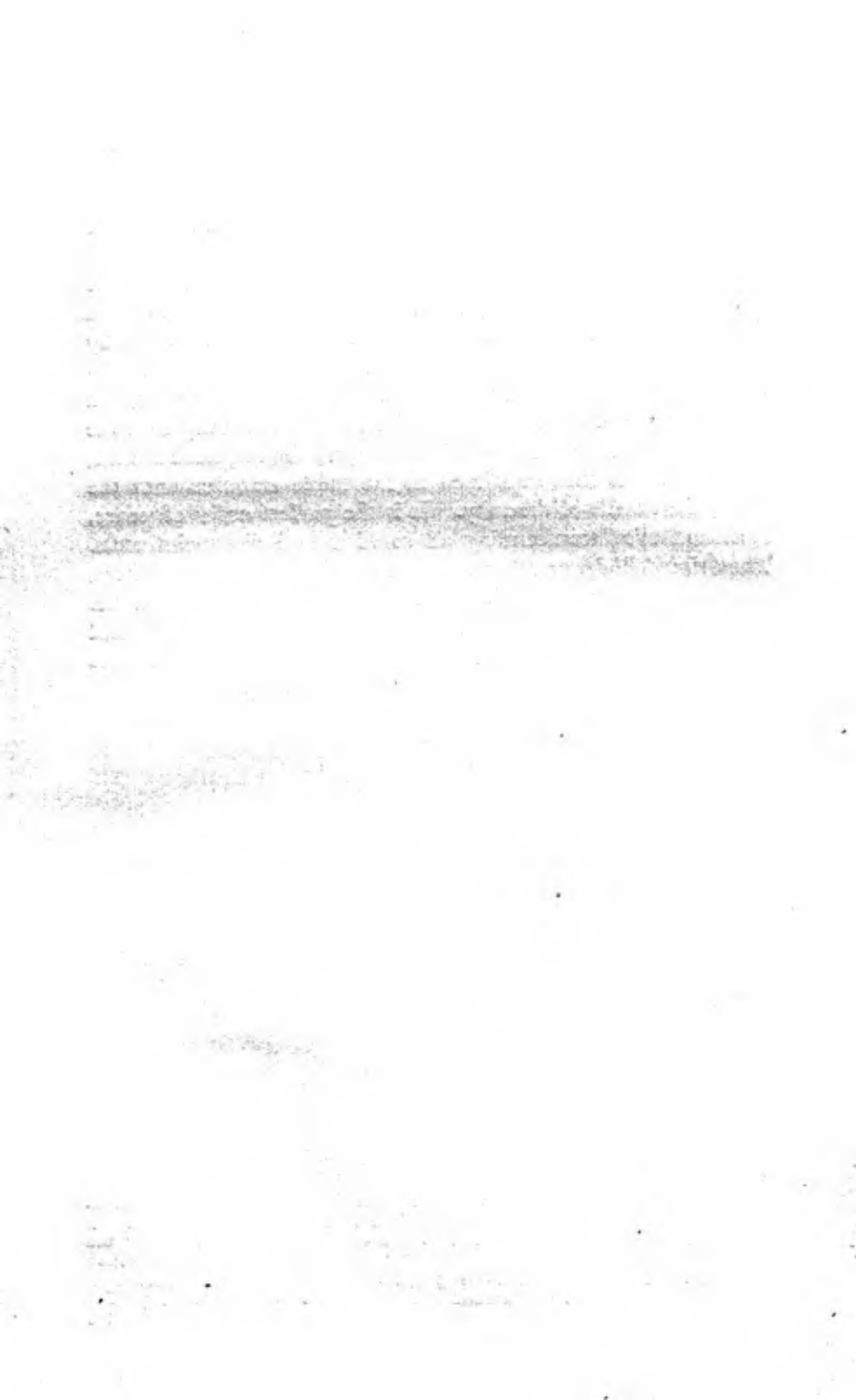
⁶ The *Praīna* describes the elements to be the expression of "*prāṇa*" :—*viññānātmā saha vedaiḥ ca sarvaiḥ prāṇa bhūtāni sampratīṣṭhanti yatra* 4.11

differentiation from a lump, is due to the sun,⁷ the physical representative of the cosmic mind which itself is the material expression of life divine.

So, the philosophy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is the philosophy of life, in perfect tune with the *Upaniṣads*. Divine ecstasy has sought to realize its inherent sweetness by the unfoldment of eternal life in thought and action. Diversity, directly traced to matter, is the expression of spirit and so it is perpetually integrated to the indissoluble unity that the Absolute stands for. *Bhagavān* Śrī-Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person, eternal bliss, is thus enbathed in inevitable embrace with the *gopīs*, the details of diversity. It is the perfect order of peace, light and bliss, transcending all conflicts and disappointments. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* has sung the eternal music of the sphere, the beauty of love that shines in its pristine glory through the cloud of everyday existence. Herein the individual can find the clue to his ontological enquiry, the key to unlock the gates of his promised land, the restoration of his lost paradise.

⁷ VS compares *Brahman* with the sun: *brahma sūrya-samam jyotiḥ* 23.48. At another place it traces the sun to *Brahman*: *veda sūryasya brhato janitram* 23.60. The *Praśna* establishes the link among the divine life (*Paramātman*), life reflected in matter (*Hiranya-garbha*) and the sun:—*indras tvam prāṇa tejasā rudro'si parjitrakṣitā*.

tvam antarikṣe carasi sūryas tvam jyotiṣām patiḥ.
2.9



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ADDITIONS

Page ii, line 8

Patañjali (200 B.C.) makes the following comments in his *Paspaśā*: *mahān hi śabdasya prayoga-viśayaḥ—catvāro vedāḥ sāṅgāḥ ... itihāsaḥ purāṇam ...* (edn. Chatterjee, p. 80). As early as 200 B.C., therefore, the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa* found recognition as distinct types of composition.

Page xiii, line 8

By 500 A.D. the Hūṇas were on the Indian soil. They were converted to Vaiṣṇavism by 700 A.D.

Page 5, line 5

This interpretation of “*tri-pād*” Viṣṇu (i.e., of Viṣṇu with three strides) reflects Skandasvāmin’s exposition of Yāska 12.19 on the RV 1.22.17:—*tredhā nidadhe padam—prātar udaya-girau, madhyandine madhye dyu-lokasya, sâyāhne’sa-girau.*

Page 205, line 1

The duration of Brahmā’s penance may be calculated in terms of his life as follows:—

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{four } yugas \times 1000 = \text{Brahmā's day (i.e., 12 hours)} \\
 & \hspace{10em} (12.4.2) \\
 \text{and four } yugas & = 12000 \text{ divine years (vide page} \\
 & \hspace{10em} 251) \\
 \therefore 12000 \times 1000 \text{ d.y.} & = \text{Brahmā's 12 hours} \\
 \therefore 1000 \text{ d.y.} & = \text{Brahmā's } \frac{12}{12000} \text{ hours} \\
 & = \frac{12 \times 60 \times 60}{12000} \text{ seconds.} \\
 & = 3.6 \text{ seconds.}
 \end{aligned}$$

So, Brahmā spent only 3.6 seconds of his longevity (*dvi-parārdha*) over penance!

Page 298, line 6

The earth and the sky appear oval from an open space. This seems to have stimulated the idea of differentiation of the three worlds—the earth, the air and the heaven—from the cosmic egg.

CORRECTIONS

TEXTUAL

Page	Line	For	Read
3	28	dispair	despair
19	10	activities	activities.
23	2	creation	creation.
26	15	Māhā-Viṣṇu	Mahā-Viṣṇu
27	15	powers	powers.
31	22	(<i>Karman</i>)	(<i>Karman</i>).
38	23	parellel	parallel
45	19	unshakeable	unshakable
53	13	<i>Ṣāt-sandarbha</i>	<i>Ṣaṭ-sandarbha</i>
62	23	<i>uru-krama</i>	<i>uru-krama</i>
67	26	inspite of	in spite of
77	10	bloom	gloom
93	29	or	and
100	35	stand point	standpoint
105	27	<i>Gautami-Tantra</i>	<i>Gautamiya-Tantra</i>
113	9	<i>iṣa-ceṣṭitaḥ</i>	<i>iṣa-ceṣṭitaḥ</i>
114	21	Sex,	"Sex,
135	29	was	were
141	24	upto	up to
151	9	<i>Śrī</i>	<i>śrī</i>
178	7	borderline	border line
254	19	Bramā	Brahmā
267	17	and	including
268	4	<i>krityā'dvaita</i>	<i>kriyā'dvaita</i>
286	19	also	also,
306	19	concept	concepts
308	20	ego-centres,	ego-centres
329	19	<i>vailakpika</i>	<i>vaikalpika</i>

REFERENTIAL

Page	Ref.	Line	For	Read
xiv,	58	10	<i>karnāte</i>	<i>karṇāte</i>
1,	7	1	<i>gāyattrye...</i>	<i>gāyattrye..</i>
1,	9	2	<i>Śve U</i>	<i>ŚU</i>
6,	26	4	<i>āviśat</i>	<i>āvīśat</i>
10,	44	10	<i>nanyante</i>	<i>manyante.</i>

Page	Ref.	Line	For	Read
7,	32	4	<i>sattveva</i>	<i>sat tveva</i>
12,	49	3	<i>turiyā'mśāḥ</i>	<i>turiyā'mśāḥ</i>
22,	102	3	<i>spṛśanti</i>	<i>spṛśanti</i>
23,	107	7	<i>bhūtāni</i>	<i>bhūtāni</i>
28,	125	2	<i>dr̥ṣṭur</i>	<i>draṣṭur</i>
31,	141	1	<i>māyayā</i>	<i>māyayā</i>
34,	150	5	<i>ṣoḍaśai.</i>	<i>ṣoḍaśai. . .</i>
34,	152	5	<i>paurvāparyam</i>	<i>paurvāparyam</i>
34,	152	6	<i>gṛhṇīmo</i>	<i>gṛhṇīmo</i>
46,	51	3	<i>viśvodbha-</i>	<i>viśvodbhava-</i>
47,	53	1	<i>vabhāra</i>	<i>babhāra</i>
49,	7	2	<i>kṛṣṇeṇa</i>	<i>kṛṣṇeṇa</i>
50,	10	2	<i>vabhūva</i>	<i>babhūva</i>
51,	14	1	<i>śarodo.</i>	<i>śarodo. . .</i>
51,	16	2	<i>saṁkramamāṇaḥ</i>	<i>saṁkramamāṇaḥ</i>
51,	19	3	<i>parāṁ</i>	<i>parāṁ</i>
51,	19	3	<i>apūrvac</i>	<i>apūrvam</i>
62,	32	1	<i>viṣṇuḥ</i>	<i>viṣṇuḥ</i>
76,	12	6	<i>visarga</i>	<i>visargaḥ</i>
83,	24	3	<i>dadr̥ṣe</i>	<i>dadr̥ṣe</i>
84,	28	1	<i>citratam</i>	<i>citram</i>
87,	37	9	<i>karmāṇi</i>	<i>karmāṇi</i>
88,	43	1	<i>caraneṣu</i>	<i>caraneṣu</i>
93,	53	1	<i>idaṁ</i>	<i>hydā</i>
105,	74	2	<i>ma</i>	<i>mā</i>
110,	85	4	<i>vibhraiḥ</i>	<i>vibhramaiḥ</i>
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